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U.S. SENATE RACE

Downstate voters key to victory for Dems

In primary, credibility beyond Chicago and its suburbs is essential

By Dan Petrella
Chicago Tribune

An endorsement by a former one-term lieutenant governor who has been out of office for a decade ordinarily wouldn't hold much significance in a primary campaign for U.S. Senate.

But an endorsement from Sheila Simon might be a slight exception. Not because of the ex-lieutenant governor's individual political influence, but because, even as the Democratic voter base in downstate Illinois is ever-shrinking, her support highlights that statewide candidates must still spend considerable time and energy wooing party members far from deep-blue Cook County.

That's become particularly true in the Democratic Party's Senate primary campaign. All three major candidates in the race are from the Chicago region and are running to succeed retiring U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin of Springfield, who for the last 28 years has balanced an upstate-downstate split in Illinois' Senate representation.

Although ballots cast outside the six-county Chicago region accounted for less than a quarter of the overall vote in the past two contested Democratic Senate primaries, in 2010 and 2016, the announcement last week that Simon was backing U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi's candidacy serves as a reminder that all three top-tier candidates in the March 17 primary know building credibility beyond Chicago and its increasingly Democratic suburbs is essential.

Simon's backing does, of course, carry some modest political weight. Now a law professor at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, she's the daughter of the late U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, the man Durbin replaced in the Senate in 1997. She also remains a recognizable and well-connected figure in a region where her family name is tied to the identity and history

Turn to Campaign, Page 8

OPERATION MIDWAY BLITZ

'Really reckless'

Experts: From shooting to Slim Jims, immigration agents' poor tactics made for needless safety risks

By Joe Mahr and Gregory Royal Pratt
Chicago Tribune

Operation Midway Blitz flooded Chicago with federal immigration agents, fueled frequent protests and — to policing experts — offered something else.

The operation showed how not to police.

In incident after incident, experts said, immigration and Border Patrol agents routinely took actions that not only infuriated civil libertarians and everyday residents but broke urban policing protocols meant to limit danger for suspects, protesters, passersby and even officers themselves.

"They haven't done anything that is anywhere close to a standard police practice," said former Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske, a former Seattle police chief and an Obama-era appointee.

Added former Chicago police Superintendent Eddie Johnson: "In my humble opinion, it's a breeding ground for disaster, the way they apply their tactics and methods. ... From what I see, they just seem to be just really reckless."

A Tribune review of the feds' policing tactics follows a scathing, 233-page opinion by U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis that called out many of the federal agents' tactics from a constitutional perspective. And the subsequent release of footage from agents' body cameras late last month not only contradicted claims they made in use-of-force reports but chronicled some of the chaos on the streets.

While some of that chaos for sure could be blamed on the actions of some protesters and arrest targets, career urban policing leaders blamed much of that chaos — in both incidents cited by Ellis and others — on what the leaders described as shoddy policing tactics shunned by more

Turn to Tactics, Page 4

Above: A federal agent points his gun sideways during an immigration enforcement action in the Little Village neighborhood on Nov. 8. Longtime urban police leaders questioned that tactic and many others used by immigration agents during Operation Midway Blitz. The policing leaders said the agents routinely behaved in ways that — beyond potentially being unconstitutional — unnecessarily endangered suspects, protesters, innocent bystanders and the agents themselves. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

INSIDE: Kristi Noem's appearance on Saturday at the annual Christmas tree ship ceremony sparks protests at Navy Pier. In Elgin, federal immigration agents use tear gas and pepper spray on a crowd gathered to protest an arrest. **Stories in Chicagoland, Page 3**

White Eagle closes after decades as Polish community hub

The White Eagle banquet hall in Niles is permanently closed. Gabi Vargas, a sales representative who started working there as a teen, reminisces there on Nov. 24. **TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Niles banquet hall played host to litany of dignitaries, celebrities

By Angie Leventis Lourgos
Chicago Tribune

The phone at the White Eagle in Niles keeps ringing, with longtime customers asking for one last pierogi or a final bowl of its famed mushroom barley soup.

An older woman cried when she learned it wouldn't be possible, recalled office manager Diane Palazzo of Victoria Venues, the current owner. The banquet hall had quietly closed its doors several weeks ago.

"She was totally shocked," said Palazzo, who has attended events at White Eagle since childhood. "She said, 'I don't think you know what it means. I've had everything there.' This is where all of her memories were."

Turn to Hall, Page 2

INSIDE

JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Bears cornerback a difference-maker

Nahshon Wright's "emotional" breakout season for the Bears comes as he mourns his JUCO coach John Beam. Plus, Al Harris has made an impact on the Bears for years. And wherever he goes, takeaways follow. **Chicago Sports**

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT PLAYS UP ARREST IN BOMB CASE: Yet leaders who announced the arrest were silent about the violence that took place on Jan. 6, 2021, at the U.S. Capitol. **Nation & World**

TODAY'S WEATHER High 30 Low 17 | Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 20 | $5.75 city and suburbs and elsewhere 178th year No. 341 © Chicago Tribune

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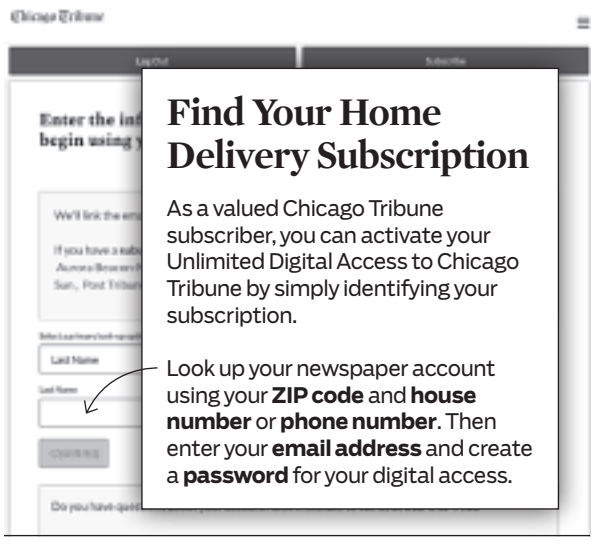
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Tribune books

"Turn It Up: A Guided Tour Through the Worlds of Pop, Rock, Rap and More" Settle in to "Turn it Up," a collection of Greg Kot's Tribune articles from 2000-2013. Previously available in ebook format only, the book is grouped by genres and include entertaining features, concert recaps, album reviews, insights on Chicago's local music scene and other major issues associated with music and the industry.

"He Had It Coming: Four Murderous Women and the Reporter Who Immortalized Their Stories" "Chicago The Musical" has played on Broadway for more than 9,600 performances since it premiered on Nov. 14, 1996, yet not many people know the characters of Roxie Hart, Velma Kelly and others are inspired by real women. Their stories were captured by Tribune reporters. This new book includes original newspaper clippings, Watkins' stories and new analysis written by Tribune reporter Kori Rumore and visual editor Marianne Mather, film critic Michael Phillips, theater critic Chris Jones and Rick Kogan.

"Capone: A Photographic Portrait of America's Most Notorious Gangster." Using many never-before-published photographs and newspaper clippings from the Tribune's archives, this coffee-table book chronicles the rise and fall of Al Capone.The photos and articles tell a fascinating story about Capone and those connected to him.

"Gangsters & Grifters: Classic Crime Photos From the Chicago Tribune." This collection of photographs taken in the early 1900s through the 1950s features infamous criminals, small-time bandits, smirking crooks, pickpockets, hoodlums and wiseguys at crime scenes. Created from the Tribune's archives of vintage glass-plate and acetate negatives, these images have been largely unseen and unpublished for generations.

"Ask Amy: Advice for Better Living" For over a decade, Amy Dickinson has been the Tribune's signature general advice columnist, helping readers with questions both personal and pressing. This book, which collects columns from 2011 to 2013, is a testament to her empathetic counsel and practical common-sense tips.

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Abner Mikva celebrates his win over U.S. Rep. Samuel H. Young for Congress in the White Eagle in Niles on Nov. 5, 1974. **JAMES MAYO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Hall

from Page 1

After more than six decades as a cornerstone of local Polish culture and a fixture in national politics, the iconic banquet hall and events center has shut its doors to the public.

The venue hosted a litany of dignitaries and celebrities over the years, from Pope John Paul II to President Jimmy Carter to former Polish President Lech Walesa. Three-time heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali was known to have dined there as well.

But it was more than just a magnet for celebrities. It was a constant in the community, a place where seemingly everyone has a memory of gathering. For generations, patrons marked every season of life at the White Eagle, celebrating their marriages and baptisms at the hall as well as grieving loved ones at funeral and memorial receptions.

Many regulars made a routine of visiting the White Eagle for a meal after paying their respects at the gravesites of loved ones at St. Adalbert Cemetery across the street, added Palazzo, whose own mother and father are buried there.

"It was something near and dear to their hearts," she said. "People got married here. People christened their children (and celebrated) here. People buried their parents and had the funeral luncheon here. So it was just a part of their family."

Now the 70,000-square-foot event space is slated for demolition.

Its famed onsite deli — known for sausage, sauerkraut and kolaczki cookies — served its last meal on Oct. 12.

"End of an era. Saying goodbye to a Niles landmark," the venue's website says. "The White Eagle is now permanently closed. Whether you joined us for a holiday brunch, stopped by to pick up some of our famous mushroom barley soup or celebrated a milestone event here, we'd like to thank you for being part of our story."

Polish President Lech Kaczyński gives a speech during his welcome to the White Eagle banquet hall during his visit to Niles, Feb. 10, 2006. **ABEL URIBE/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

White Eagle cooks Adem Spaijoski, from left, Jan Gaszynski, Zofia Bujak and Natalie Glinska hold plates of pierogi in Niles on Sept. 29, 2004. **BUZZ ORR/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

History and heritage

During its heyday, the venue served as a social hub for the Chicago area's large Polish diaspora as well as a center of political influence.

Amid a notoriously tough reelection campaign of1980, President Jimmy Carter made a stop at the White Eagle to court the Polish American vote.

Attending the 100th anniversary dinner of the Polish National Alliance, the Democratic president addressed a crowd that included then-Chicago Mayor Jane Byrne and the U.S. ambassador to Poland.

"It's been estimated that about 30% of all Americans can trace at least one of their ancestral lines back to Poland," Carter said, just a few weeks before the November election. "Your first meeting was held in Chicago 100 years ago and I'm honored, as president, to join you in celebrating your 100th birthday. And I'm sure this second century will be just as successful as the first one."

The business was founded in 1947 by Ted Przybylo, the son of Polish immigrants. Originally located in Chicago and operating under the name Andrew House, Przybylo moved the banquet hall to its current location in Niles in 1967.

The blonde brick-and-stone building rests on a stretch of Milwaukee Avenue designated as the Polish American Heritage Corridor by a state law in 2023, reflecting the numerous institutions along the strip with deep ties to Poland, including the Polish Museum of America, Oak Mill Bakery and several churches, as well as the White Eagle.

In its earliest days, the banquet hall hosted "hundreds and hundreds of weddings," many for World War II soldiers who had returned home and were getting married in droves, recalled the founder's son, Andrew Przybylo, the former mayor of Niles who co-owned the White Eagle for years with his five siblings.

"Back then, it wasn't a matter of country clubs or getting married on a horse on a beach," he said. "You would go to your local banquet hall. And my father had one of the better ones."

Over the years, the wedding business continued to thrive: The White Eagle was known for its family-style service, where large platters of food were brought to the tables for all-you-could-eat banquets featuring a variety of dishes, Andrew Przybylo said.

The site also included a restaurant with a full menu serving steaks, chops and Polish specialties like golumpki, a hand-rolled stuffed cabbage dish.

"Mushroom barley soup was the house specialty," he said, noting that it was made with imported dried mushrooms and whole cream. "Our barbecue ribs were extraordinary. The lamb shanks were very, very good."

In its prime, the White Eagle "was the spot to be," recalled Gabi Vargas, who worked there for the past 15 years.

"This place would be sold out," she said. "You'd be looking on a Saturday, during its prime time, and it would not be available."

The interior offered "an absolute authentic kind of Polish country decor," Andrew Przybylo recalled.

Today, ornate candelabras still decorate the walls and brass chandeliers hang overhead. Plush old-world carpeting covers the flooring, a remnant of a bygone era.

Framed pictures of historical versions of the Polish coat of arms — featuring the national emblem of a white eagle on a red shield — dot the walls of one banquet hall room. A large red and white Polish flag hangs in the corner.

"We were always close and supportive of the Polish American community, as the community was supportive of us," Andrew Przybylo said.

He credited his lengthy political career in part to the White Eagle. After his appointment to the Niles planning commission in 1987, he served as a village trustee for more than 20 years until his election as mayor in 2013, a title he held for eight years.

He was also a Democratic committeeman of Maine Township for more than a decade.

"I couldn't have done those things without the White Eagle," he added. "I was very grateful I was able to have a political career and a public service career, because of the White Eagle."

A Tribune article in 1996 captured the way food and Chicago-area politics were customarily intertwined during campaign seasons — and how the White Eagle typified that tradition.

"Eateries are another must-campaign stop, especially for candidates trying to court ethnic groups," the story said. "To woo African-American diners, they head to Army and Lou's on the South Side or Edna's on West Madison Street. For Polish Americans, it's the White Eagle banquet hall in Niles."

Another Tribune story explained why Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis prioritized stumping at the White Eagle during his uphill run against Republican Vice President George H.W. Bush in 1988.

"It's no secret why Dukakis made his first Illinois visit of the fall campaign to the White Eagle restaurant in Niles," the article said. "The White Eagle, owned by the Przybylo family since 1947, is a haven for white ethnic Democrats active in politics, and ethnic Democrats are one key to carrying Illinois."

'Loss of an icon'

But by the 2000s, the wedding industry began to change, with more couples celebrating their unions at country clubs, planning destination weddings or seeking nontraditional sites like zoos and botanical gardens, Andrew Przybylo said.

The 2008 global economic recession also hit the business hard, he added.

The Przybylo family sold the White Eagle to Victoria Venues in 2015, marking the occasion with a party on the premises that included performances by a local polka band. The lobby displayed photos and newspaper clippings that spanned the White Eagle's history.

Some attendees said they were grateful the new owner planned to keep the business alive and many of its traditions intact.

Others had expressed trepidation.

"I think it's a loss of an icon, a loss of heritage," longtime customer Tom Suwinski told the Tribune at the time. "My dad is buried across the street — he's turning over in his grave."

As for the White Eagle's recent closure, Andrew Przybylo said that "things change" and "you have to move on."

But the former mayor anticipates he'll likely "have some pangs when the building starts to go down."

New owner Noah Properties is expected to take over the more than 6-acre site by the end of the year, making way for a 354-unit multifamily residential development with a restaurant and green space, which was approved by Niles officials in September.

Construction on the project is planned to begin in 2026, according to the suburb's website. The building is expected to be demolished in the early phases, but, for many, the memories will remain.

"I'm forever grateful for that building," Andrew Przybylo said. "It was a marvelous run that we had there. Working hard and doing what we did as a family for other families. You couldn't beat that. You couldn't have a better job than that."

CHICAGOLAND

Noem's visit sparks protests at Navy Pier

DHS secretary appeared at 26th annual Christmas tree ship ceremony Saturday

By Cam'ron Hardy and Olivia Olander
Chicago Tribune

An appearance by U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem at the annual Christmas tree ship ceremony at Navy Pier led one of two downtown protests on Saturday — one targeting immigrant raids and the other the brewing military conflict in Venezuela.

The Navy Pier Christmas ceremony is a tradition in which crew members offload approximately 1,200 trees from the USCGC Mackinaw onto trucks to donate to families in need.

During a brief speech Saturday morning, Noem thanked everyone involved in organizing the event and wanted those in attendance to "recognize that we're bringing them news of happiness and peace."

Dozens of protesters gathered more than an hour before Noem spoke, but were moved back to Polk Bros. Park by Chicago police officers before the event began. Although the group had been moved, they could be heard chanting from the other side of the park.

Activist Andy Thayer said Noem "crashed" the ceremony as a publicity stunt. "I think it's insulting that she came to our city after doing so much destruction, to not just our city's residents, but also the city itself," Thayer said. "It's been a real huge economic hit. We've had families separated, we've had people losing their jobs because of what she's done, and she's got some nerve to show up."

Beatrix Hoffman, of the Gold Coast neighborhood, went to the protest after seeing a post about Noem coming to Chicago for the Christmas tree ceremony.

"We don't want her here," Hoffman said. "I'm sick of this government coming into our city and abducting our neighbors."

Noem's Christmastime visit comes after a fall in which thousands of Chicagoans and suburbanites protested, resisted and whistled at federal immigration agents who descended into their neighborhoods.

Without immediate regard for citizenship or legal status, agents under Operation Midway Blitz repeatedly detained people first — sometimes in unmarked vehicles or after chasing them through neighborhoods — and sought information about them later.

In one incident in September, an agent shot and killed a father of two who was from Mexico and had been living in the U.S. for nearly 20 years.

Thousands of arrests resulted from immigration enforcement raids under the administration of President Donald Trump, as he called Chicago a "hellhole" and a legal fight ensued over Trump's efforts to use the National Guard in enforcement efforts.

In October, Noem criticized the media and politicians, including Gov. JB Pritzker, for "trying to demonize" federal immigration agents and the Trump administration's enforcement operations.

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem carries a Christmas tree to load it into a truck during the Voyage of Chicago's Christmas Ship, USCGC Mackinaw on Saturday at Polk Brothers Park. The Christmas trees were later donated to local families in need. **DOMINIC DI PALERMO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

People in a second-floor cafe watch as demonstrators decry recent U.S. military actions in the Caribbean Sea near Venezuela, in front of the Wrigley building on Saturday in Chicago. **JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Earlier that month, she appeared at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in west suburban Broadview amid fierce protests there and met with ICE and Border Patrol agents.

"It may seem like right here, when you're in the middle of this chaos, that you're not necessarily sure of it, but, boy, the American people are just thrilled to have you and to have you on the job and on the task of restoring and making America safe again," she said, based on social media posts from a right-wing influencer who was embedded with ICE operations at the time. "We're not just here, we're here to stay, and we're expanding and we're going to make this city safe again."

The ICE and Border Patrol arrests and detainments set off a wave of legal activity, some related to the federal agents' activity itself and some related to ensuing protests, primarily at the Broadview facility.

With some detainees booked multiple times, ICE recorded a total of 1,912 bookings at the two Chicago-area ICE facilities from Sept. 8 to Oct. 15, according to the most recent data available. By mid-October, the arrest rate was roughly double that of early June, the most intense immigration enforcement period prior to Operation Midway Blitz, the Tribune has found.

The administration has said it was targeting the "worst of the worst," who both lacked legal status to reside in the U.S. and had committed a violent crime; DHS has also previously said it welcomed the arrest of anyone in the U.S. without legal status, whether or not they were law-abiding.

According to recently released federal data, two-thirds of the nearly 1,900 immigrants detained in the first half of the surge had no known criminal convictions or pending charges.

Around noon, a separate rally of about 75 people took place where organizations and Chicagoans spoke out against the war in Venezuela, in front of the Wrigley building on North Michigan Avenue.

This rally was one of many other demonstrations across the country, according to the ANSWER Coalition's website, one of several organizations that organized the event. ANSWER stands for Act Now To Stop War and End Racism.

The rally comes after multiple U.S. military airstrikes against alleged drug-running boats — the first in September in the Caribbean — reportedly killing over 80 people.

Alithia Zamantakis, an organizer for the coalition, said the same types of injustice regarding immigration in Chicago were happening overseas.

"We are just demanding that the billions of dollars that they are prepared to spend on killing people in Latin America, we use for poor people here in this country," she said.

Federal immigration agents use tear gas on Elgin crowd

By Rebecca Johnson and Stacey Wescott
Chicago Tribune

Federal immigration agents deployed tear gas and pepper spray Saturday on a crowd that gathered to protest a prolonged arrest in a northwest Chicago suburb, angering neighbors who said it was "uncalled for" and "tremendously disappointing."

The standoff began around 10 a.m. Saturday when about 15 agents showed up to arrest an unidentified man at an apartment building on the 1600 block of Maple Lane in Elgin. Elgin police said there had been a traffic crash that morning involving a federal agent and the man, who then fled to the building.

The crowd, blowing whistles and shouting at agents to leave, grew throughout the morning, eventually swelling to at least 200 people by the afternoon. By 2:30 p.m., the man the agents were attempting to arrest was still on the balcony. About 30 agents at the scene were trying to negotiate with him, while the crowd told the man not to talk to them.

Around 3:30 p.m., agents reportedly arrested the man while he was inside an apartment. Afterward, videos taken by a witness at the scene showed some people throwing snowballs at the agents and their vehicles, while others yelled at them to stop.

While driving away, agents hurled pepper spray and flash-bang grenades into the crowd. One agent told community members, "Back up or gas will be deployed," seconds before he threw a canister, a video shows.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokespeople didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. Meanwhile, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem joined the U.S. Coast Guard for a Christmas tree event at Navy Pier on Saturday.

Audrey Luhmann, 40, of West Chicago, said the pepper spray and tear gas went "everywhere" into the crowd and that she could still smell it about an hour later on her clothes. Luhmann said neighbors asked the agents to see a warrant, which they refused.

"It's almost as though they wanted things to escalate," she said. "I don't understand what goes through their mind to justify that kind of action. This could have been just a normal Saturday, and instead, this is what they have to do to our community."

Federal agents faced mounting scrutiny from fearful residents and the courts alike over their use of chemical crowd-control weapons during Operation Midway Blitz, which has tapered off since Border Patrol chief Gregory Bovino left Chicago with hundreds of his agents in November.

Federal agents tackle a protester after a faceoff outside an apartment building along Maple Lane on Saturday in Elgin. Community members and federal agents faced off for several hours Saturday after the agents chased a man and he barricaded himself on a second-floor balcony. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Body cameras repeatedly captured agents' apparent glee in deploying tear gas and other munitions on residential streets.

"It's clear that Chicago and Illinois remain a target of the administration," Brandon Lee, of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, told the Tribune recently after agents detained at least three people in the west suburbs.

According to Elgin police, a federal agent reported that he was involved in the traffic crash while conducting enforcement activities, and that someone involved in the crash had fled to Maple Lane. The crash occurred around 9:15 a.m. in the 1600 block of West Highland Avenue, police said in a statement.

About 45 minutes later, a separate caller in the 1600 block of Maple Lane reported that "subjects in masks were on their property stating they had a warrant."

However, the protest outside the building appeared to escalate around 12:30 p.m. A video taken by a witness at the scene shows at least two agents tackling a protester while other agents pushed the crowd back. Agents then deployed tear gas and pepper balls into the crowd, according to witnesses and videos.

Tracy Howell, 58, said the agents tackled the protester after he stepped closer to them off the sidewalk. At that point, agents shot the pepper balls, which Howell said "irritated" her nose and throat. She had arrived at the apartment building around noon, she said.

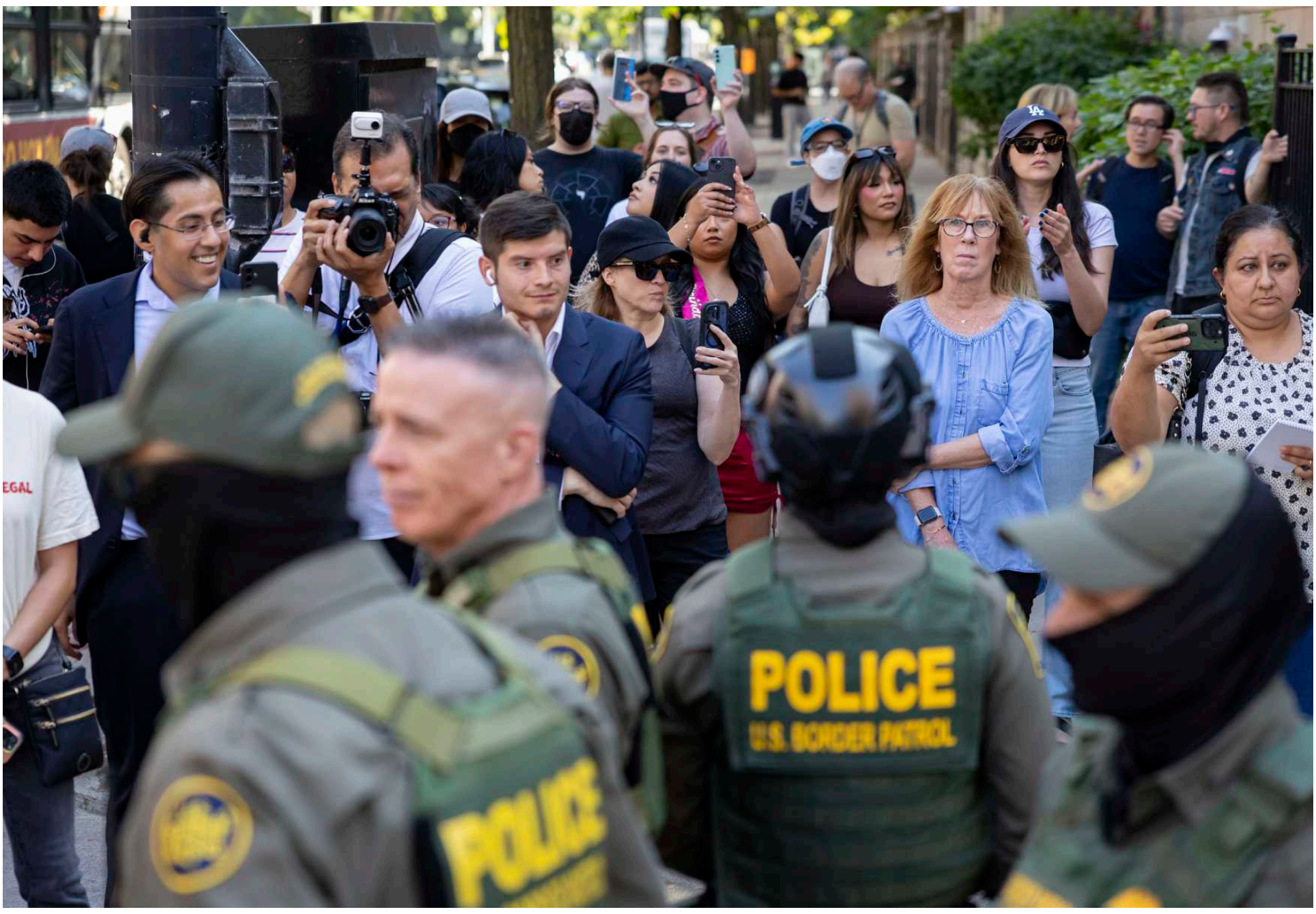
"(The agents) just kept saying, 'Move back. Move back.' And I kept asking, 'Where do you want us to move back to?' " she said. "And the guy who was most aggressive ... pushed me to the ground."

Howell said neighbors were bringing pizzas, water and hand warmers so the group could stay out protesting longer. She said, "It causes me so much anxiety" to see the federal immigration activity in her community, especially the use of chemical crowd-control weapons.

"That was just testosterone and anger and uncalled for. There was no reason for it. One little step and they're triggered," she said. "I never would have guessed that I would have been pepper shot at or pushed down by law enforcement."

Elgin police said they received reports that shots had been fired, but they determined this wasn't true after arriving at the scene. They instead found that agents had "dispersed chemical irritants." They treated and released seven people at the scene.

"The Elgin Police Department will continue to respond to any calls for service and determine the appropriate action within the parameters of the Illinois Trust Act, which prohibits Elgin officers from assisting with federal immigration enforcement operations," the department said.



People watch as federal agents march near the Newberry Library in Chicago's Gold Coast on Sept. 28 after walking through downtown as part of an immigration blitz show of force.
BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Tactics

from Page 1

advanced big-city police forces.

The questionable tactics were on display in ways big and small, experts said, from the way agents regularly tossed tear gas, to how they pointed guns at protesters and the media, sped around town and handcuffed arrestees.

They were on display in incidents from the most violent, including when a man was shot and killed as he tried to flee. And they were on display in the most banal exchanges, including when a caravan of agents was confronted by angry protesters at a gas station where their commander was trying to get a snack and use the bathroom.

When asked about criticism of its policing tactics, DHS said its agents are well-trained and did what they could to "mitigate dangers" in a place where it said agents routinely were assaulted as they fought "rioters" and "domestic terrorists."

"The disgusting attempts by the media and 'experts' to say these agents are not trained to enforce the law is shameful and laughable," according to a statement by DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin issued Nov. 26, about two weeks after many federal agents left Chicago for other operations.

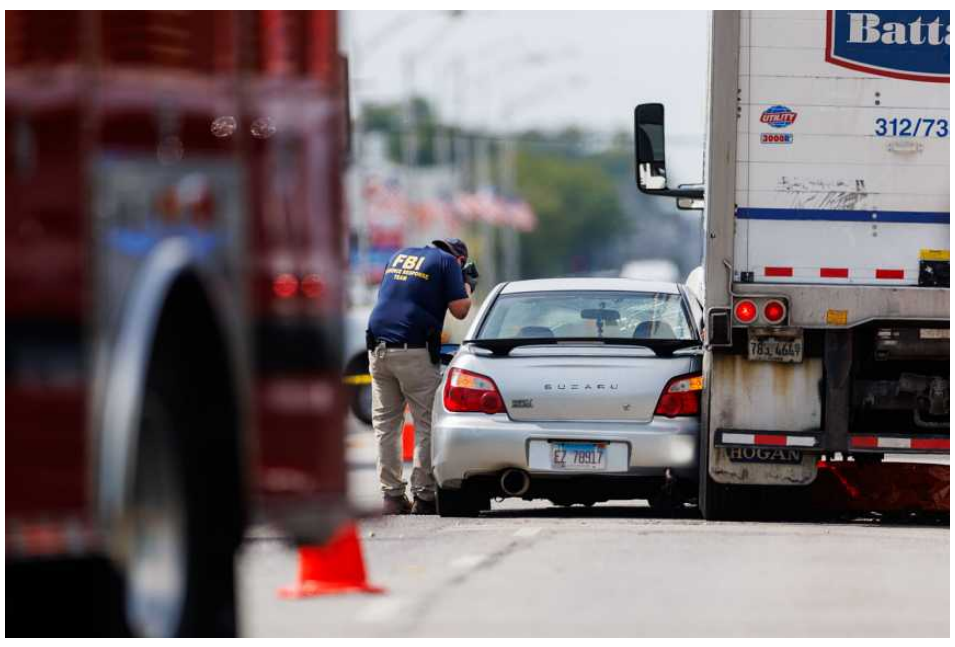
The face of Operation Midway Blitz, Border Patrol Cmdr. Gregory Bovino, argued that his agents showed expertise and restraint in the face of constant confrontation with angry Chicagoans — one of whom allegedly put a bounty on him.

"Definitely Chicago — it's a pretty tough place. But you know, the border, it's a tough place also. That's why we do so well here," he told reporters during that gas station stop, as protesters gathered near his agents outside.

But those with deep experience in urban policing say the growing pains appeared obvious, as many agents were dropped into a city most didn't know well and told to do policing tasks most had little experience doing, in a political environment their bosses helped stoke to produce the confrontations.

"I'm not blaming the majority of these agents," said Kerlikowske, who also testified in federal court on the Chicago tactics. "I'm blaming the lack of supervision, the lack of training, the lack of leadership for this."

Johnson said the tactical concerns are separate from the goals of immigration enforcement, which — while controversial in a polarized America — had been going on in Chicago for decades before the blitz, albeit more strategically and quietly: "It's not always what you do. It's how you do it. ...



Federal Bureau of Investigation and other law enforcement officers investigate the scene where an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent shot and killed a man after ICE says the man tried to flee a traffic stop and struck the agent with his vehicle on Sept. 12 in Franklin Park. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Franklin Park police body-camera footage captures the aftermath of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent shooting that killed Silverio Villegas González on Sept. 12.
VILLAGE OF FRANKLIN PARK

Sometimes law enforcement can create their own chaos."

Granted, Illinois Democrats have claimed that Trump's DHS has purposely tried to stoke chaos as a pretext to justify sending in troops — something DHS denies but shows just how toxic the politics have become.

Regardless of motives, unnecessary chaos can lead to tragic outcomes, experts said, and not just of the supposed "bad guys." Cops and innocent civilians can get killed too.

"There's a way for (DHS) to do it better, to do it smarter, where fewer people get hurt, that they get the same result in terms of the people that they want to arrest," said Kenneth Corey, a former top New York City police leader. "When you use proper tactics, things don't escalate into uses of deadly force when they don't need to."

Fatal shooting

Five days into Operation Midway Blitz, and as part of a stated mission to hunt "the worst of the worst," U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents targeted Silverio Villegas González Sept. 12 for what DHS described as "a history of reckless driving."

Two agents, in a Jeep with flashing lights, got Villegas González to pull his car to a curb in Franklin Park, but then chose to pull their Jeep in front of the car at an angle, presumably to keep Villegas González from driving forward.

A woman is given milk to ease the pain in her eyes after federal officers threw canisters of chemical agents at community members and protesters from their vehicles while leaving the 3900 block of South Kedzie Avenue on Oct. 4 in Chicago.
ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

But that's a key tactical mistake because it endangers law enforcement, experts pointed out. If Villegas González had a weapon, he would have had an easier shot at an agent. Plus, as agents walked back to each side of his car, it meant one was in a clear path to be hit if Villegas González tried to flee.

"You never put yourself in front of the vehicle," Kerlikowske said. "Every police officer knows you don't put yourself in harm's way."

A video broadcast by CBS 2 shows Villegas González backed up, as agents ran beside his car, and then swerved out of frame to try to get around the agents' Jeep. According to the initial report from DHS, the agent said Villegas González tried to run him over and dragged him.

That leads to a second tactical mistake: Presumably, in order to be dragged, an agent had to have reached into the car in some way — a basic no-no of a traffic stop, experts said, because it puts an officer at risk of getting tangled in the vehicle's movement(.

So when the agent was dragged, he faced a tough, split-second decision to assess if his life was in danger, in which he chose to shoot Villegas González in the neck.

Regardless, even if the agent's fear in the moment was reasonable, experts said, that shot itself put the public at serious risk: by creating, in essence, an unguided missile on a public roadway. After all, a 2013 report commissioned by DHS noted that a "½ ounce (200 grain) bullet is unlikely to stop a 4,000 pound moving vehicle."

That means if a driver loses control, a runaway vehicle could careen into other law enforcement arriving to help. Or other cars driving on the street. Or people waiting at a bus stop. Or even moms pushing strollers.

In this case, as Villegas González began bleeding out, his car ran into the side of a stopped tractor trailer — luckily blocking its path from more vulnerable traffic or pedestrians and avoiding more injury or loss of life.

Loop patrol

Nearly three weeks into the operation, U.S. Customs and Border Protection decided to march dozens of agents in military gear through the Loop in what Bovino told WBEZ was a "regular patrol" to scout for any immigrants in the country without legal permission.

The Sept. 28 march was controversial for a number of reasons; the mayor and governor said it was meant to intimidate the city's mostly-Democratic residents, and WBEZ reported that Bovino said agents decided who to stop, in part, based on how they looked. The operation included arresting a family agents came upon in Millennium Park.

But, from a tactical perspective, policing experts questioned why agents would be randomly roaming around a busy area, without any idea of a more precise location of legitimate targets and no apparent strategy on how to use vehicles to help box in fleeing suspects deemed a threat.

"You're just going to walk through the Loop hoping to, at random, run into people? I mean that's a poor use of resources. You're not going to get a lot of return on your investment," said Corey, who works with the University of Chicago Crime Lab's Policing Leadership Academy. "But that wasn't the intention. To me, this is clearly intended for the media shock value. And that's all it was."

The tactical flaws emerged in what became a viral video of one aspect of the operation, when a cyclist taunted agents gathered at the corner near the Dearborn Street Bridge by calling out that he wasn't a citizen and daring agents to arrest him. The cyclist then appeared to drop something and scoop it up as one agent, then others, started to give chase.

> ***"There's a way for (DHS) to do it better, to do it smarter, where fewer people get hurt, that they get the same result in terms of the people that they want to arrest."***
>
> *— Kenneth Corey, a former top New York City police leader.*

With agents all on foot, and no apparent contingency plan on how to box in anyone fleeing on a bike, the cyclist rode away faster than agents trying to catch him, some agents sprinting for a few seconds while others are closer to a trot, including one agent whose tactical gear that day included a white cowboy hat.

"It was comic relief," Johnson said. "Tactically — don't get me wrong, things can spring up on you on a moment's notice that you're not exactly prepared for. ... (But) they clearly weren't coordinated on what they were doing."

Protests spurred

A tough-talking DHS courted massive publicity for the operation, which helped fuel protesters bent on disrupting it, and that created potentially dangerous scenarios of convoys of agents on missions being trailed by caravans of protesters honking horns and blowing whistles, experts said.

The scenario led to an agent pumping five bullets into a protester Oct. 4 in Brighton Park.

There are conflicting stories about what happened. Agents said the woman sideswiped their SUV and tried to run over an agent who got out. Her attorney said the agents steered into the woman then shot her unnecessarily as she tried to flee the danger that agents caused — buttressed by body camera footage that her lawyer said shows one agent, moments before the crash, saying "Do something bitch."

While federal prosecutors dropped charges against the woman and have launched a separate criminal probe of the shooting, policing experts say it's hard to judge how agents responded because the facts remain in dispute. Beyond that, there have yet to be any best-practices developed for the relatively

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unique scenario in Chicago of protester caravans trailing law enforcement caravans from operation to operation.

But there are protocols for what happened next, after a crowd of protesters predictably gathered at the scene of the shooting to complain about the federal agents' actions.

Policing policies have evolved to focus on de-escalation: trying to be as open as possible to community leaders and calm down the crowd. It's not just about seeming to be a warm and fuzzy police department. The calmer a crowd, the less likely it is to fuel agitators within it to start throwing rocks or bricks that can hit and hurt officers, experts said, and spur wider melees that get even more people injured on both sides.

And an early video of the incident appeared to show one unmasked federal agent doing that, as he convinced some people to back up, saying "You can all stay right here. That's totally fine. ... Thank you."

And, in general, Bovino told reporters that safety was agents' primary concern: "We're always concerned about our agents and the public — because that violence can also spill into places we don't want it to."

But in Brighton Park that day, over four hours, as the crowd grew from about two dozen to around 200, a court ruling recounted how DHS took actions that agitated the crowd. Witnesses said agents drove recklessly near protesters, dropped flash-bang grenades and began shooting pepper balls at them.

Along the way, a bearcat — a type of armored vehicle — drove into the scene with a federal agent's head popping out of a hatch, a weapon trained on protesters. Policing experts said that type of vehicle is typically used only in situations where officers are being fired upon or believe they risk it — such as rescuing a hostage or a fallen comrade amid a gunbattle. They say its use at a protest risks making things more volatile.

DHS has justified its response by claiming Chicago police refused to quickly help — an assertion the Trump administration has included in its pitch to the U.S. Supreme Court to try to justify Trump putting troops in Chicago. Chicago police counter they showed up quickly, backed up by a New York Times investigation.

Regardless, as Chicago police were already at the scene trying to calm protesters, federal agents tear-gassed the crowd on their way out, including the Chicago police officers who'd come to help them-depart.

Beyond the constitutional concerns, that type of tear-gassing is a poor tactic, the experts said.

Tear gas should be a last resort — not used liberally anytime protesters make things uncomfortable for agents, the experts said. Tactically, the gas may spread out protesters, but they can come back, angrier, with more people and gas masks, making them even harder to control. Beyond that, the gas can float to all sorts of areas — not just the lungs of protesters but anyone else who happens to be downwind such as babies, asthmatics and the elderly.

It for sure immobilized many of the police officers who'd come to help the federal agents.

"When they're throwing tear gas, and you have 20 Chicago police officers that don't have masks and are getting gassed themselves, I mean it's pretty clear that they're not handling things properly," Kerlikowske said.

DHS, in its statement, broadly defended its tactics handling protests: "When faced with violence or attempts to impede law enforcement operations, our officers will take legal and necessary steps to ensure their own safety and that of bystanders, up to and including use of force."

'PIT' and tear gas

In a scene pieced together from court records and videos, CBP agents tried to stop two "suspicious" men in a Ford Escape Oct. 14 but the Escape drove off, allegedly hitting the agents' rental car. So the agents gave chase.

Over 18 minutes in a dense East Side neighborhood, federal agents sped down alleys, blowing red lights and stop signs, and careened around corners with so much G-force that the agent in the passenger seat at times held on to the Ford Expedition's handles with both hands. More troubling: the agents' rental had no emergency lights or sirens — meaning passersby had even less warning to get out of their way.

Desperate for help from other federal agents, but complaining they hadn't gotten enough, the agent driving the rental Expedition decided to use a "PIT" maneuver on the Escape, despite the agent acknowledging he wasn't certified to do it. Video broadcast by WGN shows the collision sent the suspects' Escape spinning across an intersection and into a parked car.

Luckily, no one else was hit, but an angry woman at the scene later screamed at agents that she was almost hit, and that agents should "be ashamed" for their actions causing the dangerous crash.

"You will chase anybody. You don't give a (expletive) what's in front of you. You almost hit me. There could be kids," she shouted, later adding: "Driving like maniacs in our (expletive) community is not allowed."

Policing experts agree that chases are inherently dangerous for cops and passersby so they should be limited to only the most serious cases using the most caution — particularly in dense urban neighborhoods.

"Doing it in the middle of the street, there's not really a lot of room for that car to spin," Corey said.

In its statement, Homeland Security said the PIT maneuver is a "standard law enforcement technique" used only once in Chicago to "stop a pursuit and dangerous situation" where agents said they were rammed.

After the crash, much like in Brighton Park, a crowd of protesters gathered and there were some signs of agents' de-escalating — trying to calmly talk to some in the crowd — but the incident ultimately ended with another head-shaking tactic.

Chicago police responded to try to keep the crowd at bay and clear a path for other responding Border Patrol agents and tow trucks to deal with the two heavily damaged vehicles. The Chicago officers had a simple ask: Don't deploy gas. But DHS body cameras recorded how federal agents had already begun forming plans to "gas" the crowd, with one agent saying "We're definitely going to gas them when we get out of here."

That's what they did, throwing tear gas canisters mere feet from unmasked Chicago officers who'd lined up to protect the agents,

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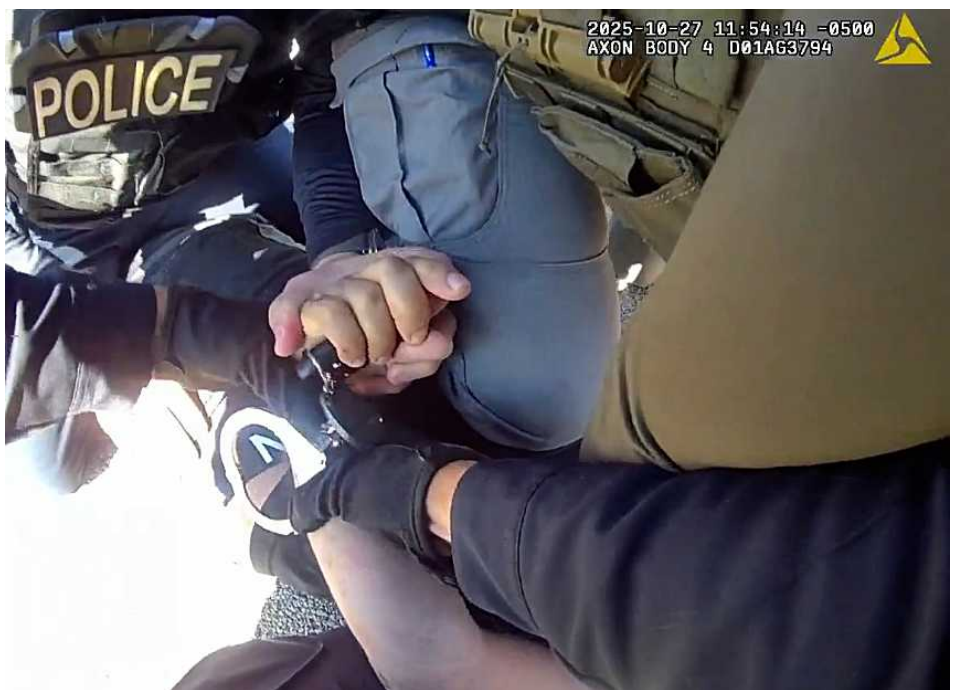
Federal officers detain a person while community members and activists protest near the 3900 block of South Kedzie Avenue on Oct. 4 in Chicago. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

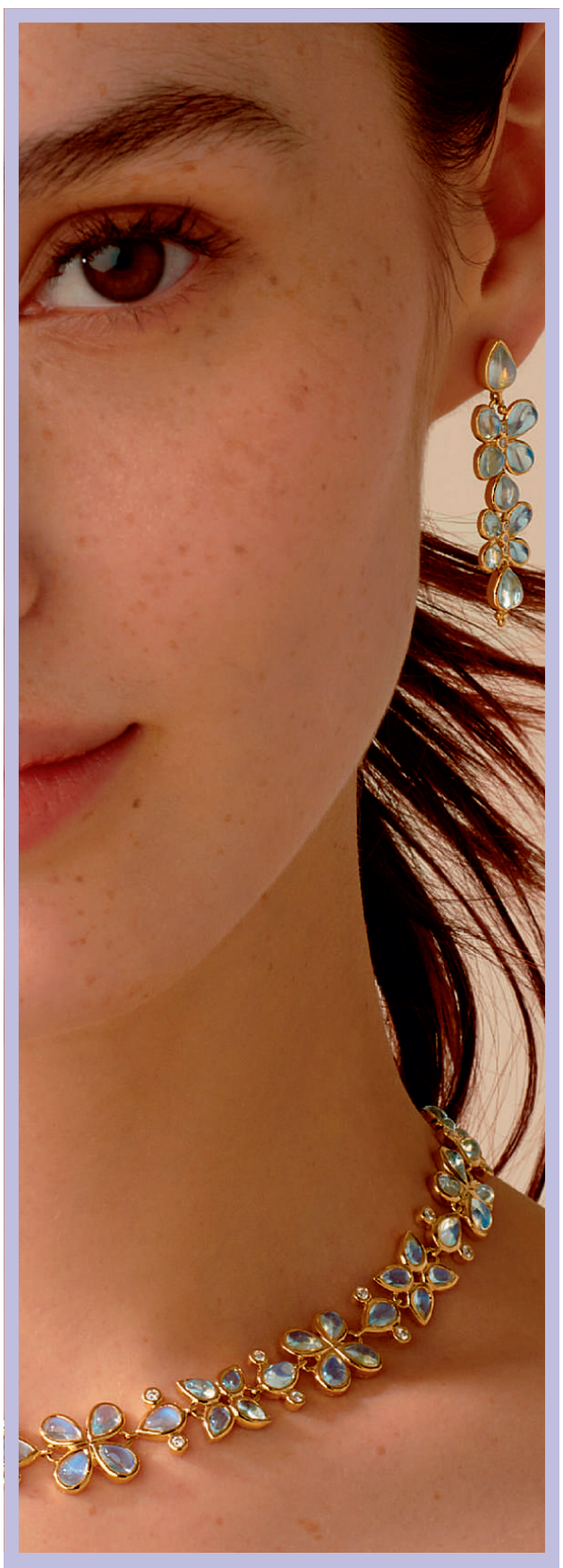
A body camera worn by a federal agent captures, from inside the government's rental SUV, parts of an 18-minute vehicle chase around an East Side neighborhood on Oct. 14. The chase ended when the agent driving the SUV purposely crashed into the suspects' vehicle and sent it careening across an intersection into a parked car, while the force set off the air bags in the agents' SUV. **LOEVY & LOEVY**



Body camera footage obtained in a Freedom of Information act request depicts a Palatine police officer participating in a federal immigration arrest on Oct. 27. Village officials said the officer acted in order to ensure the safety of the man being arrested, the federal agents and the crowd, but others have questioned whether the officer's actions violated state law. **PALATINE POLICE**

"When they're throwing tear gas, and you have 20 Chicago police officers that don't have masks and are getting gassed themselves, I mean it's pretty clear that they're not handling things properly."

— former Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske



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and continuing to throw gas even after the crowd had begun fleeing. Once again, experts said, they not only used tear gas in dangerous ways, but did it in ways that affected fellow cops trying to help the agents.

Guns and cuffs

Throughout the operation, federal agents walked around in full tactical gear, sporting big pepper-ball rifles, tear gas canisters and sidearms that, like typical police officers, remained holstered.

But agents at times pulled their handguns and pointed them at protesters, the type of move that is inherently dangerous if someone isn't a threat — and something police officers trained in crowd control try to avoid at all costs.

Not only can it lead to errant gunshots, or at least agitate the crowd more, it also means that — if an agent decides not to use the handgun during a confrontation — he or she has lost use of that hand.

"The gun's already in your hand. So you've already lost control of the firearm. And if you're not going to be discharging it, it's pretty hazardous," Kerlikowske said.

Worse yet, video and photographs caught federal agents pointing guns out of vehicles Nov. 8.

An agent in a driver's seat was holding the gun sideways, which may look good in a rap video but in real life risks a gun jamming after one shot, experts said. Another agent, in a passenger seat, in a video posted by CBS 2, briefly points a gun while holding it outside a window, making it easy for someone to come from the side and push the arm against a door pillar to force the agent's wrist open and take the gun.

"It wouldn't take a whole lot of effort to do that," Corey said.

Federal agents struggled even with handcuffs at times. In a Palatine parking lot Oct. 27, three ICE agents struggled to get cuffs on one man on the ground.

According to an after-action memo by Palatine police, a Palatine officer arrived to find one agent kneeling with her weight on the back of the suspect and holding handcuffs the wrong way to get them to work right.

The officer "realizes the agents' lack proper training" and "are resorting to dangerous tactics," according to the report, with the local officer fearing that agents are suffocating the man on the ground.

"(The officer) believes at this moment if he does not act and do something, the individual will be seriously injured," according to the report.

So the officer helped handcuff the suspect and prompted agents to sit up the suspect to ensure he could breathe. As protesters taunted the agents, a female agent responded by "blowing kisses" to the crowd, a final questionable tactic that Palatine police complained made it harder for them to calm down the crowd once federal agents left.

Even in the biggest, arguably most planned raid — at a South Shore mid-rise, which DHS turned into a slick social media video — tactical experts questioned why DHS would have agents rappel from a helicopter to get onto the roof. Helicopters are loud, meaning you lose an element of surprise, plus can crash in a tight urban environment or, more likely, get agents injured jumping down from ropes.

It's fine tactically to secure a roof — to limit the chance of someone taking shots or throwing things at law enforcement, the former police leaders said. But if the goal is to get the roof fast and quietly, the stairs are a much safer route, particularly in a pre-dawn raid counting on the element of surprise.

"Instead of using a helicopter, we (Chicago police) would have simply went in the building and sent people up a stairwell to be on top of the roof — if we thought that was necessary," said Johnson, who ran Chicago's department for 3 ½ years.

Snack run

By early November, the daily pattern had long been set. Immigration agents would depart on missions roving around parts of the city and suburbs.

Protesters — many dubbing themselves part of "rapid response" teams — would document agents' moves as best they could. A subset would follow the agents in vehicles, honking horns and blowing whistles.

And when agents stopped anywhere, protesters would gather around, at times encircling agents — the intensity ratcheted up the longer agents lingered in one place.

In short, police experts said, it was the type of environment where agents could best succeed by precise, quick, well-planned operations that minimized where they stopped, and how long they stayed.

Even Bovino, in speaking with Associated Press earlier this year, talked about being careful to plan operations to limit the ability of protesters to disrupt them.

And yet, federal agents had a habit of stopping at gas stations and convenience stores to grab snacks, like a family making a pit stop during a road trip. One of times came during a particularly intense day — Nov. 6 — when a federal judge had ruled agents' heavy-handed enforcement actions "shocks the conscience" and said Bovino had lied about his past use of force.

That afternoon, the federal convoy stopped at a Gage Park convenience store, with reporters trailing behind Bovino, who offered an impromptu interview beside the aisle with Slim Jims. Roughly 50 people stood outside, many blowing whistles and filming on phones. Others soon arrived — the group screaming at agents and blocking traffic — as some agents waited, weapons in hand, in the shadow of the gas pumps. Inside the station, Bovino described the day as "very violent." He explained his primary concern was for the safety of "our agents and the public." Then he referred to the crowd that had formed outside.

"I mean, look at what's happening here just to go use the bathroom and get something to eat, that's even a safety concern here in many areas," he said.

But policing experts said there's a simple solution to that: In the heat of violent, intense operations drawing protests, find a safer place to take a restroom break and grab a snack — such as a secured federal facility. The FBI, for one, has a gated headquarters about 20 minutes from that gas station.

"You're not stopping at the convenience store to use the bathroom and buy snacks in that environment," Corey said. "You're going to go back to the office. You're going to go to someplace that's much more friendly territory. You're certainly not going to go in by yourself. Everything about it is just like, 'This is not what you'd do.' "

Chicago Tribune's Sam Charles contributed.

Border Patrol Cmdr. Gregory Bovino buys drinks at a Skokie gas station while conducting immigration enforcement actions in the area on Oct. 31. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Hundreds rallied against the Indiana House's plan to redistrict on Dec. 1 in Indianapolis. **ALEXANDRA KUKULKA/POST-TRIBUNE**

Redistricting bill passes Ind. House

But Senate leaders have said it doesn't have the votes there

By Alexandra Kukulka
Post-Tribune

The Indiana House passed new congressional maps Friday and sent them to the Senate, where the bill's future is unclear since Senate leadership has stated multiple times since October it doesn't have the votes.

House Bill 1032, which addresses mid-census redistricting and gives Republicans an advantage in all nine congressional districts, passed 57-41, with 12 Republicans joining all Democrats present in voting against the bill. State Rep. Tim Yocum, R-Clinton, voted against the bill in the House Elections and Apportionment Committee and on the House floor.

State Reps. Michael Aylesworth, R-Hebron; Julie Olthoff, R-Crown Point; Hal Slager, R-Scherville, and Ed Soliday, R-Valparaiso all voted in favor of mid-census redistricting.

State Reps. Mike Andrade, D-Munster; Earl Harris Jr., D-East Chicago; Ragen Hatcher, D-Gary, Carolyn Jackson, D-Hammond; Chuck Moseley, D-Portage; Randy Novak, D-Michigan City; and Vernon Smith, D-Gary voted against mid-census redistricting.

During final reading of the bill, no Republican House member addressed the bill besides state Rep. Ben Smaltz, R-Auburn, who authored the bill, and House Speaker Todd Huston, R-Fishers.

States across the country are conducting mid-census redistricting, Huston said, which means Indiana should address the issue as well.

"This is the place we are right now. This is our time to act," Huston said. "This is a challenging issue, one none of us took lightly. Not one of us didn't have long, thoughtful, meaningful conversations about it."

While it's likely that state Republicans have talked about mid-census redistricting privately, Jackson said she found it "troubling" that none of the Republican House members have addressed the issue from the House floor.

"You may have said it at home, in your closet, in your basement, in the backroom where only you have heard it, but you have not said it here," Jackson said. "You just come in here and you look solemn like you lost your best friend."

While a risk, Slager said he voted in favor of mid-census redistricting because constituents in his area supported it.

"I still think it's a risky gambit, but I still had reason to believe this is how my district wanted me to vote," Slager said.

The risk, Slager said, is that the maps will be used in a midterm election without Trump on the ticket.

"I think we'll be lucky to still come out 7-2. But who knows, we'll find out," Slager said.

It's also likely that the bill will die in the Senate because it's been reported that the Senate doesn't have the votes, Slager said.

"It's entirely possible that the Senate not pass this and that's the end of it," Slager said.

Aylesworth said he supported the bill because of Huston's comments about other states taking up mid-census redistricting.

"I think it all made good sense," Aylesworth said. "I was undecided until today."

Aylesworth said he heard from Republican constituents who supported the bill and Democratic constituents who were against the bill.

While he didn't want to speculate about the Senate, Aylesworth said he hopes the chamber passes the bill.

"Hopefully, they don't endorse any changes to the map we approved," Aylesworth said.

House Bill 1032 would allow the legislature to amend congressional districts "at a time other than the first regular session of the general assembly convening immediately following the United States decennial census."

The bill also establishes new congressional districts, and states that any challenges to the new maps will be heard by the state's Supreme Court, thus preventing county judges from blocking the new maps.

The bill states that the current congressional districts won't expire before Nov. 3, 2026.

In committee Tuesday, Smaltz said Indiana is taking up mid-census redistricting because of that action across the country, including Texas, California, Virginia and Missouri. The constitution allows for congressional districts to be drawn with political consideration in mind, he said.

The map was drawn by the National Republican Redistricting Trust using data from the last three presidential elections and the last two Indiana elections for U.S. senator, secretary of state and attorney general, Smaltz said.

"These maps were drawn for political purposes and advantage," Smaltz said.

While Republicans have stated the maps are for political advantage, Hatcher said the map is discriminatory because it only impacts the minority-majority areas of Indiana.

"They echo a broader pattern, one where certain communities are expected to contribute economically, culturally, civically, yet remain limited in the power that they are allowed to hold," Hatcher said.

Drawing districts in Indiana has consequences as "it's a measure of whose voices are valued, whose are managed," Hatcher said.

In a statement, Hatcher said northwest Indiana "knows something about lines."

"We know about lines that separate, exclude, and contain. We know about lines as tools of power, not justice. This isn't new for our community," Hatcher said.

For three and a half hours, Democratic House members urged Republicans to vote against the bill, stating that Republicans hold the majority of Congress and the White House, Hoosiers don't support mid-census redistricting and the precedent the bill sets.

"The precedent this sets moving forward is that redrawing our congressional maps is simply a free for all. Whoever is in power can do whatever they want to make sure they stay in power. This will cause irreparable harm to public trust in the ability of our government to act out of anything but self-interest," Jackson said in a statement.

THREATS PILE UP AGAINST IND. GOP: Trump and his allies press senators to redraw congressional map. **Nation & World, inside Opinion on Page 6**

The proposed map will dilute and disenfranchise minority voters throughout the state, Harris said.

"There is nothing positive I can say about this map proposal or how House Republicans have conducted themselves this week," Harris said in a statement. "They have put politics ahead of Hoosiers, and there is no forgiving that."

The map splits northwest Indiana between two districts, Andrade said. U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan, D-Highland, who serves in the current 1st District, has represented the region well, Andrade said.

"(Mrvan) continues to stand up for us despite being unwanted in our state by Republicans in Indianapolis who know nothing about The Region," Andrade said in a statement. "These maps undermine the voice of the people and denounce a community that has contributed enormously to our state."

Attorney General Todd Rokita said in a statement that Hoosiers "deserve to have their say on the issues of the day" but their voices are "drowned out" by redistricting efforts in Democratic-led states.

Rokita said his office is prepared to address any potential lawsuits against the new map, particularly in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling Thursday that Texas can use its newly passed map that gives the state five more seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"This specific map is legally solid. If any group or individual is silly enough to sue, we will defeat their attack in court. As the United States Supreme Court emphasized once again last night, redistricting for political reasons is constitutional," Rokita said.

Indiana Democratic Party Chair Karen Tallian said in a statement the Republican supermajority in the House "took itself to a new low by passing clearly gerrymandered maps that seek to silence and ignore the wishes of their own constituents."

Multiple polls have found that Hoosiers don't support mid-census redistricting.

"No Hoosier could possibly think these maps keep communities together. They split Indianapolis in four pieces, split up the Region, and divide communities that are linked together, like the steelmaking communities of Lake and Porter counties," Tallian said.

House Democrats offered 15 amendments, all of which failed, during second reading on Thursday. The amendments offered protection for minority voters, different approaches to redistricting, and addressed fiscal implications of the bill.

A few hours before gaveling in Monday, the House released its proposed map that splits the current First District into two districts, and the 7th District, currently held by U.S. Rep. André Carson, D-Indianapolis, into four districts.

President Donald Trump and his administration has asked Republican-led states to undertake mid-census redistricting to maintain the Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Redistricting typically occurs every 10 years after the release of census data. The Indiana constitution dictates that the legislature should take up redistricting every 10 years after census data is released.

In response to Trump's request, Texas conducted mid-census redistricting to give Republicans five more seats, to which California responded with voter-approved mid-census redistricting to create five more seats. In August, Vice President JD Vance met with state Republicans to discuss redistricting in Indiana. Ultimately, after more meetings and discussions with federal officials, Gov. Mike Braun called for a special session to address redistricting.

Both chambers of the Indiana legislature agreed to meet Dec. 1 to discuss redistricting. Ahead of Organization Day, Nov. 18, Senate President Pro Tempore Rodric Bray, R-Martinsville, announced the Senate does not have the votes to pass new maps and canceled the Senate's December session.

The Senate has been a hurdle for mid-census redistricting as Bray has stated multiple times since October that his chamber doesn't have the votes to pass new maps. Instead, Bray said Senate Republicans believe a better option would be to support a strong Republican candidate in the 1st District in the upcoming midterm elections.

After swatting calls against several Senate Republicans, including Sens. Dan Dernulc, R-Highland, and Rick Niemeyer, R-Lowell, Bray said the Senate will reconvene Dec. 8 to review and vote on redistricting legislation passed by the House.

Sen. Mike Gaskill, R-Pendleton, chair of the Senate Committee on Elections and Senate sponsor of the bill, said in a statement Friday that Indiana's representation in Congress "has been watered down" by redistricting efforts in Democratic-led states.

"I am committed to advocating for this bill that will more fairly represent Hoosiers at the federal level," Gaskill said. "I vow to foster a civil debate as we review this bill in the Senate."

Senate Democratic Leader Shelli Yoder, D-Bloomington, said in a statement Friday that House Bill 1032 "is about silencing Hoosiers and diminishing representation."

"This bill tears apart communities, strips voters of representation they voted for and hands control to national figures who are more interested in cementing absolute power rather than solving any problems," Yoder said.

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CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL

Sweeping ban on hemp products in city advances

By Jake Sheridan
Chicago Tribune

Ald. Marty Quinn listens to community members during a Chicago City Council hearing discussing a proposed hemp product sales ban on Wednesday. Quinn sponsored the proposed ban, deriding hemp shops as "shady operations" in opening remarks. DOMINIC DI PALERMO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

A broad ban on hemp products in Chicago advanced in the City Council Wednesday, teeing up a vote that could suddenly shutter the burgeoning industry.

Proponents argue the proposed ban would make Chicago safer by speeding up a pending congressional prohibition on the products that get users high. But Mayor Brandon Johnson's administration has urged aldermen to rework the ordinance with narrower regulations.

Hanging in the balance are dozens of small businesses like Rubina Mirza's Ukrainian Village shop, Kizmah CBD.

"This proposed ban on these products will put me out overnight and destroy all the hard work I spent with my family building a small business," Mirza told aldermen as the meeting started in a room packed with hemp supporters.

But a majority of the License and Consumer Protection Committee was unconvinced, as aldermen voted 10-6 to advance the ban. The full City Council could cast a final vote as soon as next Wednesday.

Southwest Side Ald. Marty Quinn, sponsor of the proposal, derided hemp shops as "shady operations" in opening remarks. And he shot down Johnson's calls for changes to the blanket ban, such as carveout to allow craft breweries selling hemp beverages to continue operating.

"These are weak and bad arguments no matter how you look at them," Quinn told aldermen before the vote. "There's a strong coalition behind this ordinance that can move it forward."

Ivan Capifali, Johnson's Business Affairs and Consumer Protections commissioner, countered that the city does not have the resources to effectively enforce a complete citywide shutdown of hemp product sales. It would also cost the city around $10 million in sales tax revenue and harm the industry that now helps support 10,000 jobs, according to Capifali's department.

The "expansive prohibition" could go beyond its apparent intended target of intoxicating hemp to unintentionally wipe out a far range of products,such as drinks, foods and skin care products, Capifali said. And as the final version of the impending national hemp ban passed last month as a part of Congress' shutdown-ending spending plan remains broadly undetermined, the city should instead help shape federal standards, he added.

Capifali urged aldermen to not vote on the broad ban and instead first pass a ban on hemp sales to minors. The City Council could then work toward regulations like packing standards and location restrictions, he said.

"The ordinance would inflict economic harm, is operationally unsound and it's premature during federal policy development," Capifali said. "We stand committed to work collaboratively."

The debate Wednesday marked yet another turning point in a fierce City Hall debate over hemp's legality heightened by dueling, well-organized lobbying efforts: on one side, hemp sellers, and on the other, cannabis business owners who hold the rare, coveted licenses to grow, distribute and sell legalized marijuana. Cannabis companies argue hemp products skirt the regulations and taxes applied to cannabis while selling similar products, undercutting their businesses.

After efforts to create hemp regulations failed amid gridlock earlier this year, seven aldermen banned hemp from their wards. Three more plan to enact ward-level bans soon, Capifali said.

Advocates for the hemp industry have said they are in support of regulations that do not fully ban their products, including a ban on sales to minors and packaging restrictions.

Johnson at first counted on regulating and taxing the city's legally-gray hemp products to bring in $10 million when he released his 2026 spending plan in October. But he halted his regulation efforts and stopped counting on the money weeks later after the so-far undefined federal ban passed weeks later.

During Wednesday's meeting, Southwest Side Ald. Silvana Tabares referred to the products affected by the ban, some of which do not get users high, as "dangerous narcotics" while arguing the tax money from hemp sales should not be a focus of debate. "Unregulated, intoxicating hemp" is available all over the city, from convenience stores to smoke shops, she said.

"Public health is not for sale," Tabares, 23rd, said. "This is not about generating revenue. It is about ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children by preventing them from accessing these harmful products."

But while a majority of the committee's aldermen opted to send the ordinance to the full council, some advocated for them to slow down. South Side Ald. David Moore, who voted against the ban, called the measure "extreme."

"We have to find that sweet spot in terms of making sure our children are protected, but we cannot throw the baby out with the bathwater when we have legitimate businesses doing the right things," Moore, 17th, said. "So let's be fair about this. Let's take that time."

North Side Ald. Debra Silverstein, the committee's chair, similarly urged Quinn to further discuss the ordinance with hemp-selling business owners. But that compromise deal should have been proposed earlier, she said while urging aldermen to pass the measure.

"We need to for the safety of our children and our community," she said. "We don't have another two, three months to wait on this."

After the meeting, Quinn called the vote a "good first step." Asked if he was open to changes to his ordinance, he said he is "not as worried" about non-intoxicating hemp products. His next moves will be determined by how many aldermen support the current version, he added.

Campaign

from Page 1

of local Democratic politics.

Coming out on top of a primary field that currently stands at 14 candidates will require building a coalition of support that extends beyond Chicago and Cook County, said John Jackson, a visiting professor at SIU's Paul Simon Public Policy Institute.

That's a big part of the reason the top three candidates have played up their downstate bona fides, Jackson said.

For both Krishnamoorthi, of northwest suburban Schaumburg, and Rep. Robin Kelly, of south suburban Lynwood, that means emphasizing their Peoria roots: his upbringing in an immigrant family there and her time at Bradley University and two decades, on and off, spent living in the central Illinois river city. Kelly also points to the makeup of her current congressional district, which stretches from Chicago's South Side to Danville in east-central Illinois.

U.S. Reps. Robin Kelly, from left, and Raja Krishnamoorthi and Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton stand after a candidate forum for their U.S. Senate race at IBEW Local 134 in Chicago on Nov. 13. TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

A South Side native, Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton leans on her two terms in statewide office alongside Gov. JB Pritzker, particularly her role leading the Governor's Rural Affairs Council, and her education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

One thing that can help distinguish a candidate, particularly in parts of the state that often feel overlooked or forgotten, is face time with voters, Jackson said.

"People want to be — especially (party) activists — want to be talked to," Jackson said. "They want people (running for office) to show up."

Even in the age of social media algorithms, TV advertising also remains an important tool for candidates to become familiar to voters.

With several visits to Carbondale and other communities in the region this year and TV ads airing on multiple networks since summer, including on affiliates based out of nearby Kentucky and Missouri, Krishnamoorthi has built an advantage, at least in that corner of southern Illinois, "that's going to be hard for the other two to match," Jackson said.

Building a strong base of support downstate in the early stages of the campaign allows candidates to focus more attention and resources on Chicago and its voter-rich suburbs as primary day gets closer. It has possibly become even more important with the rise of early voting, both in person and by mail. Voters actually will start casting ballots during the first week of February.

In the state's closest Democratic Senate primary in recent memory, then-Illinois Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias in 2010 topped a field of five candidates.

Giannoulias, who lost the general election that November to Republican Mark Kirk of Highland Park, won his party's primary by 5 percentage points over his nearest competitor, former federal prosecutor and Chicago Inspector General David Hoffman.

Giannoulias' margin of victory was padded by a strong showing outside Cook County and the five collar counties. While he won the Chicago area vote by 2 percentage points, he took the downstate vote by nearly 16 points.

This year, "if it's close enough, especially in a three-candidate race, downstate could be a factor," said Dan Shomon, a lobbyist and political consultant who was campaign manager and political director for Barack Obama's 2004 U.S. Senate run. The host of lesser-known candidates on the ballot could further split the vote.

To shore up support outside the Chicago area, "it's important ... that you're there, you're there early and you're there often," said Shomon, who isn't working with any of the current Senate candidates but has contributed $1,000 each to Krishnamoorthi's campaign fund and a Stratton-affiliated political action committee.

In 2004, Obama, a state senator from Chicago, lost the downstate vote in the Democratic primary by nearly 16 percentage points to the better-connected, better-funded campaign of then-Illinois Comptroller Dan Hynes. But the time Obama spent downstate, going back to a 1997 trip to southern Illinois when he was a freshman state lawmaker, helped him outperform expectations, garnering just over a quarter of the vote outside Cook and the collar counties in the Senate primary, Shomon said.

For Krishnamoorthi, the recent endorsement is "important because of the Simon credibility factor," Shomon said. And the amount of time Krishnamoorthi, a five-term congressman, has spent building support far from his home base in the northwest suburbs "makes a huge difference," Shomon said.

"It also shows that a candidate who's Asian American can get votes in areas where there's very few Asian Americans," he said.

Stratton also "has spent a significant amount of time downstate," Shomon said.

Indeed, while Krishnamoorthi has made his central Illinois roots a central theme, launching his campaign in front of his childhood home in Peoria, and has traversed the state for many months, including an eight-stop downstate listening tour over the summer that brought him to Simon's Carbondale home, neither of the other major candidates is conceding the downstate vote.

Stratton, who was the first candidate to officially enter the race, has made campaign stops from Rockford to Murphysboro and from Alton to Champaign-Urbana.

Like Krishnamoorthi, the two-term lieutenant governor has focused on securing endorsements from downstate Democratic Party chairs, whose support can bring on-the-ground manpower.

Stratton has received the backing of local party chiefs in nine downstate counties, compared with 14 for Krishnamoorthi. Stratton's backers include the chair in Jackson County, which includes Carbondale.

"In addition to campaign appearances across the state, the lieutenant governor has spent the last seven years traveling to communities in every corner of Illinois and meeting with Illinoisans in her official capacity," campaign spokesperson Allison Janowski said in a statement. "She's the only candidate who has represented the entire state, and she's not a stranger to communities in southern, central, northwestern Illinois, or in the Greater Chicago region. They know her, they know her record, and she has delivered real results for their communities."

That's true for Brandi Bradley, chair of the Williamson County Democratic Party in far southern Illinois.

A former staffer for Durbin and southern Illinois U.S. Reps. Jerry Costello and Bill Enyart, Bradley has gotten to know Stratton over the years in her role as a local party leader. Bradley also has been the Pritzker-appointed Illinois designee to the multistate Delta Regional Authority, which supports economic development in the lower Mississippi River and Alabama Black Belt regions. She's worked with Stratton in that capacity as well.

"She's spent the time, and she's listened," Bradley said. "And so to me, it was an easy choice. It wasn't just about a campaign. She knows our region well, and I've worked really well with her."

While Krishnamoorthi and Kelly have congressional experience, to represent a region in the Senate, "the core thing you have to have is an understanding of the area, the issues and a love for the people, and then you can represent them in Washington well," Bradley said. Stratton's "experience with the state and working the whole state is more valuable than someone that has been ... working in Washington."

Kelly, meanwhile, has focused her downstate campaigning in more populous areas such as Rockford, Springfield, Peoria, Champaign-Urbana, the Quad Cities and the Metro East region just across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. But she's also made stops as far south as Carbondale and DuQuoin and hit smaller communities in central and western Illinois.

Kelly's "people over profits" message, which includes supporting a $17-per-hour federal minimum wage, resonates with voters concerned about affordability across the state, including rural communities like those in her district, her campaign said.

That economic platform, which also includes a proposed minimum federal tax on individuals whose annual net worth exceeds $100 million, is an important part of Kelly's appeal to state Rep. Carol Ammons, an Urbana Democrat who has endorsed the seven-term congresswoman.

The boundaries of Ammons' Illinois House district and Kelly's congressional district are about 12 miles apart, but the two have worked together on numerous legislative and political issues, and Kelly's is a familiar face on the U. of I.'s flagship campus and in the broader Champaign-Urbana community, Ammons said.

In addition to knowing the needs of rural communities like those she represents in Congress, Kelly "knows how Washington works," Ammons said. "She's been there long enough to know how to get things done, and that experience is going to be extraordinarily invaluable in the moment that we're in in D.C. and in the nation."

For her part, Sheila Simon, who served alongside Gov. Pat Quinn from 2011 to 2015, is somewhat skeptical about how much influence her individual endorsement — even with its implicit attachment to her father's legacy — will have on the outcome of the Senate primary.

Such endorsements "probably don't carry a whole lot of weight at all, but maybe it causes a few people to pay some closer attention and to look into a candidate that they might have overlooked before. So that's what I'm hoping for."

Simon has known Krishnamoorthi since his unsuccessful primary campaign for state comptroller in 2010, the same year she was elected lieutenant governor alongside Quinn. When Krishnamoorthi came to speak at SIU's law school early this year, before he jumped into the Senate race, Simon was impressed by the way the congressman connected with an audience that ranged from the Simon Institute's John Jackson to Nick Wilhelm, the 15-year-old son of a colleague.

Simon also touted Krishnamoorthi's ability to draw on his experience growing up in a family that for a time relied on federal public assistance to address the challenges facing low- and middle-income Illinois families today.

When Krishnamoorthi returned to Carbondale in July for a campaign event at Simon's home, Nick Wilhelm was in attendance again, this time introducing the candidate to the small group.

Making that kind of connection with supporters far from home is key to running a statewide campaign, Simon said.

"The math adds up to spending a lot of time in the Chicago area because that's where most of the primary voters are," she said. "But my vote down here in Carbondale counts as much as anyone's vote up in Chicago. ... You need to be able to appeal to the state, and campaigns are part of the process of getting you ready to serve. And whoever is elected the next United States senator is going to be serving the whole state, and they're going to be able to do a better job if they know the whole state, if they have someone they can call in every part."

HARVEY

Residents, officials try to understand city's finances

South suburb is in midst of a prolonged fiscal crisis

By Evy Lewis
Daily Southtown

Harvey Ald. Colby Chapman and Glynis James-Watson look through a spreadsheet of city expenditures Thursday at Chapman's 2nd Ward headquarters. **EVY LEWIS/DAILY SOUTHTOWN**

Harvey residents gathered at a Thursday discussion event hosted by Aldermen Colby Chapman and Tracy Key and City Treasurer Aisha Pickett to try to understand the city's opaque finances.

Pickett was elected in 2019 and reelected in 2023. She said throughout her time as treasurer, she has not been provided the necessary information to understand the city's financial situation and do her job.

"My tenure as treasurer has not been the easiest. As they mentioned before, there are things I don't necessarily have access to," Pickett said. "It makes my job very difficult."

Harvey is in the midst of a prolonged fiscal crisis. The city government has operated on reduced hours and severely cut staffing since October, when the City Council voted unanimously to apply for designation as a financially distressed city.

That designation would allow the city to receive state financial relief and oversight under the Illinois Financially Distressed City Law, with the state appointing a three-person board to oversee the city's finances. Only one Illinois city, East St. Louis, has previously received the status. Illinois does not otherwise have a mechanism in place for municipalities to declare bankruptcy.

Pickett expressed frustration, saying she felt she wasn't being allowed to serve the residents.

"I'm hoping that with this current situation, maybe some things will turn around. I'm hoping things will be more open, that they'll be more willing to work with us, because we are willing to do the work," Pickett said. "We just need some little cracks in the door."

Residents Glynis James-Watson and Amanda Askew assembled a spreadsheet compiling the various bills lists approved at City Council meetings over the past year to try to better understand the city's expenditures.

The City Council approved the most recent bills Oct. 27. Both meetings scheduled for November were canceled.

"The only thing that we've ever received, ever, as it relates to our financial state, is the bills list," Chapman said. "Anything further than that, when there's a request for invoices, a profit and loss statement, or just, for instance, the settlement agreement where these businesses are paying $30,000 a year to operate without a business license, none of that has ever been provided to us."

James-Watson, who works with budgets as part of her job, pointed out a few things she found strange about the compiled bills lists, including hundreds of thousands of dollars of expenditures being categorized under "miscellaneous appropriations."

"In budget terms, there should not be a miscellaneous anything appropriated," James-Watson said. "Everything you plan to spend for the year is supposed to be appropriated in your budget."

Shortly after the City Council voted to declare the city financially distressed, Harvey laid off 40% of its workforce in what was initially framed as temporary furloughs, cutting nearly half the Fire Department and more than a third of the Police Department.

Another round of firings last week laid off eight additional staff from the Fire Department, Police Department and Public Works Department. Chapman said she found out about those firings on the news, despite being on the City Council.

One issue at the core of Harvey's financial difficulties is a painful property tax double-bind. Harvey has one of the highest tax rates in Cook County. Correspondingly, it also has the third lowest property tax collection rate in the county. When the high rates mean that some people can't or won't pay their taxes, the tax burden falls even harder on those that do, and the result is a budgetary shortfall for the city.

The same day the meeting was held, nuEra Cannabis opened a dispensary in Harvey. A news release about the opening emphasized the benefit of the dispensary's projected tax revenue to Harvey, estimating that it would generate more than $200,000 annually.

Mayor Christopher Clark has said that blame for the city's dire financial straits falls primarily with the former mayor, Eric Kellogg, whose administration was rife with expensive scandals the city is still paying for, including failure to make required payments to the fire and police pension funds and the diversion of water bills owed to the city of Chicago.

However, critics of Clark, including Chapman and Key, said the mayor is dodging accountability and has caused more problems by not being transparent with city's finances from the beginning. Clark was first elected in 2019.

"You should know when you run out of money," Key said. "We're not trying to cause any trouble. We're just doing our jobs."

elewis@chicagotribune.com

Ex-Cook County judge sentenced to probation after stealing from former Tuskegee Airman

By Madeline Buckley
Chicago Tribune

Former Cook County Judge Patricia Martin on Friday was sentenced to four years probation after she admitted to stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from the bank accounts of an elderly former Tuskegee Airman to purchase cryptocurrency.

Martin, 66, who previously served as presiding judge in the Child Protection Division of Cook County Circuit Court, pleaded guilty to one felony theft count, marking a quiet end to a legal saga that involved a lawsuit, a petition for criminal contempt of court, a $1.1 million default judgment and a disbarment.

The accusations against Martin, who retired from the judiciary in 2020, were first revealed in a lawsuit and attorney discipline complaint that alleged she took nearly $250,000 from the bank accounts of 95-year-old Oscar Wilkerson, a friend whose financial affairs she was supposed to manage.

In November 2020, a doctor who held a power of attorney for Wilkerson asked Martin, the niece of the man's former spouse, to help the doctor manage his affairs as they recommended he move to an elder care facility.

On Dec. 26, 2020, Martin, the complaint alleged, holding herself as his power of attorney, closed out two of the man's bank accounts, withdrawing $115,353.45. A few days later, Martin used the funds to purchase $110,000 in cryptocurrency in her own name.

Between February 2021 and October 2022, Martin used more of the man's money "without authority, to make additional cryptocurrency purchases for her own benefit, as well as towards her own personal purposes," the complaint said.

In July 2022, the senior living facility contacted the doctor to let him know that the man's bills had not been paid in about two months, and his account was more than $41,000 in arrears, according to the complaint.

After that, the facility terminated the man's residency.

Then, the doctor discovered the closed bank accounts with zero balances and hired an attorney.

The attorney corresponded for several weeks with Martin "without obtaining answers to his questions."

The attorney filed a civil claim in 2022, and a judge later ordered a default judgment of more than $1.1 million when Martin failed to respond to the allegations.

Wilkerson died on Feb. 8, 2023. A grand jury in 2023 indicted Martin on seven felony counts of theft, money laundering and financial exploitation of an elderly person.

Because of Martin's status as a former judge, the case was assigned to McHenry County Judge Tiffany Davis.

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EVANSTON/SKOKIE SCHOOL DISTRICT 65

Impasse means board unable to decide on school closures

By Richard Requena
Pioneer Press

The Evanston/Skokie School District 65 Board of Education reached an impasse again Monday, unable to make a decision on schools it will close on July 1. That complicates the district's efforts to cut costs and balance its budget, outlined in its Structural Deficit Reduction Plan.

The board members voted in much the same way they did in November, when they reached an impasse over closing Kingsley Elementary School and Lincolnwood Elementary School, or just Kingsley, at the end of this school year.

The board now faces uncertainty about whether it will be able to close any schools at the end of the school year, aside from the Dr. Bessie Rhodes School of Global Studies, a decision the district's administration says is necessary for the district's long-term financial goals.

District 65 board members Sergio Hernandez, Mya Wilkins and Andrew Wymer voted to close both Kingsley and Lincolnwood schools, but faced opposition from board members Maria Opdycke, Patricia Anderson and Nichole Pinkard, who voted to only close Kingsley.

When a motion to only close Kingsley was on the table, Opdycke, Anderson and Pinkard voted to close it, with the objections from Hernandez, Wilkins and Wymer blocking the board from committing to that scenario.

Part of the board's inability to reach a deciding vote comes from the resignation of board member Omar Salem, which came before the board took a vote on school closures. With the vacant Board seat, there have been multiple 3-3 votes that have stymied any action on future school closures.

The Evanston/Skokie School District 65 Board of Education convening on its Dec. 1 meeting. **RICHARD REQUENA/ PIONEER PRESS**

A previous Board of Education voted in 2024 to close Bessie Rhodes on June 30, 2025.

The board has a Dec. 16 special Board of Education meeting to appoint a new member, who could potentially cast a tie-breaking vote on school closures.

A simple majority of the board would be needed to appoint the new member. If the board should deadlock again and not fill the vacancy within 60 days of Salem's Nov. 4 resignation, the regional superintendent of schools is required to appoint a board member within 30 days thereafter.

At a previous board meeting on Nov. 20, Superintendent Angel Turner told the board that its inability to make a decision on school closures before winter break will result in no school closures at the end of this school year.

Before the board voted, each member spoke briefly to explain their vote.

"I'm fine with saying next year, at this time, that Lincolnwood School would be on conversation for closure, but I believe in this community, this board, the educators and the community, that we can come up with a better solution that does not harm the marginalized population," Pinkard said.

"I'm voting tonight for a two-school scenario because it is the only option for us that centers the long-term financial sustainability of our entire district," Wymer said

"I cannot vote for a one-school closure, because I would have to violate my vote to act in the best interest of the whole district, not just one neighborhood," he added.

After the vote, a hush fell over the large audience at the Joseph E. Hill Early Childhood Center. In a turnabout of the mood in weeks passed, which varied from impassioned protests and public comment sessions where residents slammed the board, applauded and heckled one another, attendees turned somber after the board failed to close a single school after four votes.

Esteban Quiñones, a member of the grassroots group The Legion of Data Nerds, a group of data experts who have been critical of the district's school closure process, said while he wouldn't have predicted the board's vote, he wasn't surprised by it either.

"It's a little deflating. ... I think most of the community, whether they differ on the number, understand that we need to close at least one school," he said.

"We were hopeful that there would at least be some compromise today, where if they can't agree on two, then they would at least settle on one of the two," Quiñones said.

Quiñones contended that the board could not vote on the same measures after a new board member is appointed. The district's administration did not respond to inquiries from Pioneer Press regarding whether the board could still vote in January, or later, to close a school at the end of this school year.

Oakton School parent Lindsey White, a frequent public commenter, said that the blame for the board's indecisiveness comes from board president, Anderson.

Before the start of the school year, the district's administration floated a proposal to close up to four schools at the end of the school year.

"I think there's going to be a large attempt to paint this as this all falls on the shoulders of the three board members who voted against closing one school only. But this is truly a failure of board leadership, and an inability of that leadership to have effective conversations over this entire fall break," White said.

White anticipated that when the board has a chance to vote on school closures next year, the district's financial problems will only be exacerbated, causing even more school closures to come down the pike.

The district began its Structural Deficit Reduction Plan to cut millions of dollars in expenses in 2023, just months after Turner began her tenure at the district. A review of the district's finances found that the district had a deficit greater than $10 million for two years prior under then-Superintendent Devon Horton.

Horton's recently announced indictment from the federal government where he was accused of embezzlement during his tenure by hiring his friends to do little or no work for the district has further complicated trust in the district's administration, the Board of Education and the public.

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Members of the Cook County Board of Review, Commissioners Larry Rogers Jr., speaks as George Cardenas leans over to listen to Chief Deputy Commissioner William O'Shields during an announcement of reopening previously closed townships for property tax appeals at the Cook County Board of Review offices in Chicago on Thursday. **ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Cook County property taxpayers to get another shot at appeals

By A.D. Quig
Chicago Tribune

Citing this year's record property tax hikes, the Cook County Board of Review is giving taxpayers another brief shot at knocking down their bills for next year.

Every Cook County township will reopen for appeals to property tax assessments, the county's estimate of a home or business' value, through Dec. 12.

Successful appeals won't offer any immediate relief on the bills that just landed, however. Any savings would apply to next year's second installment bills, which typically land in the summer. People who already appealed aren't eligible.

Taxpayers will have through Dec. 22 to submit accompanying evidence. Filing is free. It can be completed online, in-person at the county building or at one of a series of upcoming Board of Review events. Homeowner appeals do not require an attorney.

The latest round of tax bills, due Dec. 15, doubled for many South and West side homeowners, but fell for big commercial Loop buildings. The bills' arrival has fueled finger-pointing on the Chicago City Council and among county candidates who face primary voters in March.

All three commissioners on the board — two of whom are up for reelection — used a Thursday news conference to announce the additional appeal time to criticize Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi, who set the initial values of Chicago properties last year that ended up on this year's bills.

Commissioner Larry Rogers, a Kaegi adversary, said the assessor should issue mass corrections — called certificates of error — for neighborhoods such as North Lawndale and Englewood that saw significant assessment hikes. Those neighborhoods are also the least likely to appeal, a recent study from the county treasurer showed.

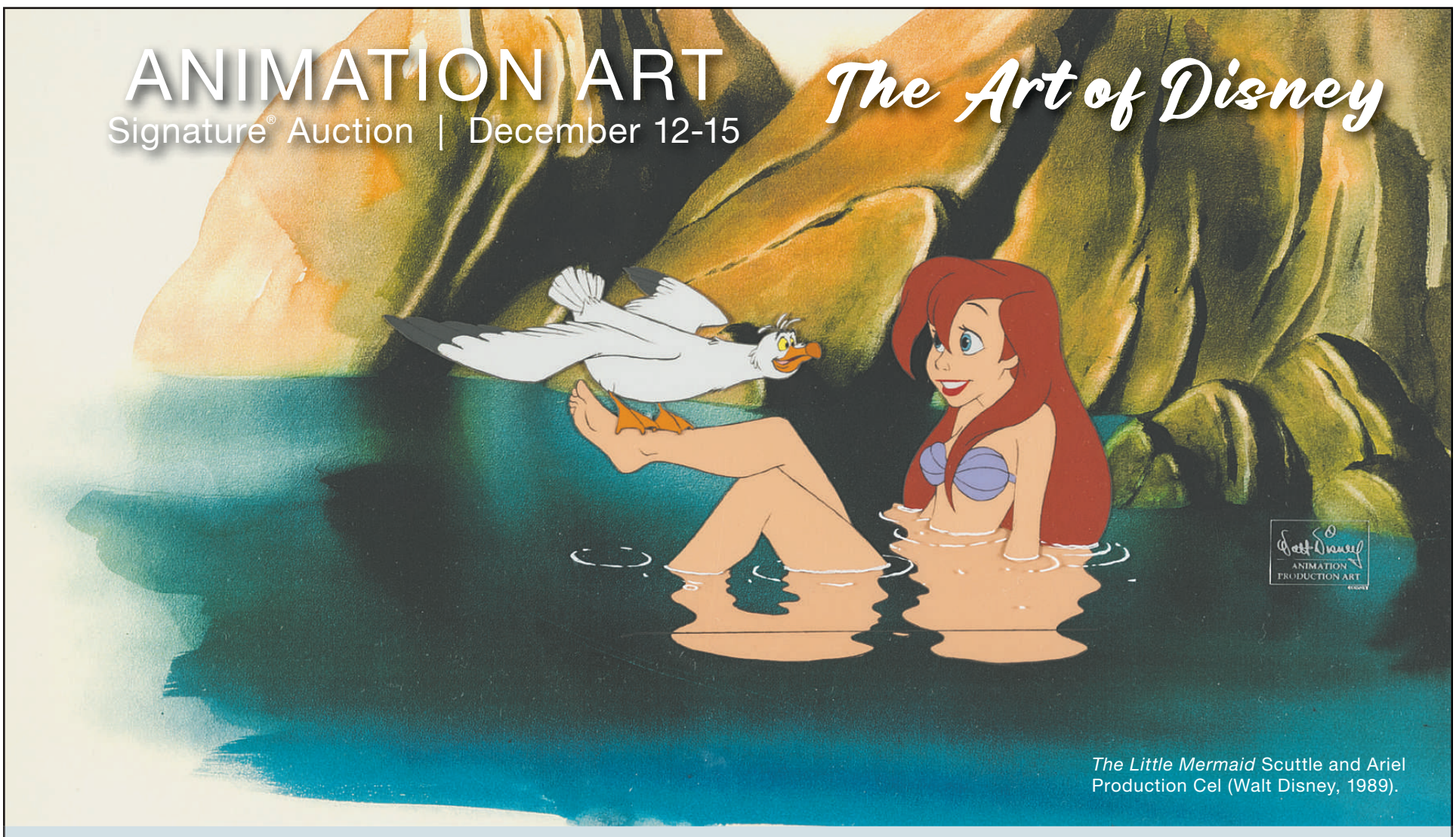
"Fritz Kaegi, with the stroke of a pen, can correct those valuations" by issuing those certificates, Rogers said, pointing to prior adjustments Kaegi made to assessments during the pandemic and in floodplain areas.

Kaegi spokesman Christian Belanger pointed the finger back at the board, saying their downward adjustment to commercial properties were the reason areas such as North Lawndale and Englewood saw "unfair and unjust" bills. The floodplain and COVID-19 adjustments were made long before bills came out, not retroactively.

"Moreover, Illinois lacks a circuit breaker-type program to protect homeowners against sudden property tax spikes, which is why Assessor Kaegi has worked with legislators to file a bill in Springfield that would protect against these spikes," the statement continued.

The assessor has so far failed to win approval of his circuit-breaker idea, which he hopes the state would fund. Kaegi's office does plan to hold events on the South and West sides next week for taxpayers that believe there were errors such as incorrect square footage, property classifications or missing exemptions.

The time it will take to get through another appeals window might contribute to bill delays next year, officials acknowledged. But they argued the county's upgrade with Tyler Technologies already set the property tax offices back "two or three" cycles. The next round of bills — equal to 55% of this year's total — are slated to be due in April.



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WILL COUNTY

Board taps reserves to cover $2.77 million deficit

By Michelle Mullins
Chicago Tribune

The Will County Board voted Thursday to use just over $2.77 million from its cash reserves to balance its budget for its 2026 fiscal year that started Monday.

The board voted 20-0 Thursday to reconcile its budget during a nearly two-hour special meeting after an unbalanced budget was approved two weeks ago.

While all board members present agreed to use cash reserves to close the gap, some members said they did so reluctantly because there was no other choice.

Last month, the board's Republican Caucus along with Democrat Destinee Ortiz, of Romeoville, approved no tax levy increase in a 12-10 vote. However, the budget on the agenda included a 1.75% levy. The two conflicting votes created the shortfall of nearly $2.8 million.

The owner of a home valued at about $250,000 would have paid an extra $7 to the county with the 1.75% levy, according to the county's supervisor of assessment's office.

"The County Board shouldn't be looting its cash reserves as a matter of practice to fill funding holes created by lazy and reckless financial planning," Speaker Joe VanDuyne, a Wilmington Democrat said. "It's bad accounting. It's bad government. It's bad business."

VanDuyne said the budget that was passed allowed for spending based on the 1.75% increase in the tax levy, but when the board cut the levy to zero on the County Board floor, it did so without considering the spending cuts necessary to balance the budget.

"The narrow majority that approved the budget did half the job and then walked away," VanDuyne said.

Finance Committee Chair Sherry Newquist, a Steger Democrat, agreed.

"I don't believe it's proper practice," she said. "I don't believe it's a good idea to use reserves to fill operational holes. However, we do need a balanced budget and I believe this is the only way forward for us at this point.

Newquist said she held special finance committees in the last few months where department heads presented their needs and board members could ask budget questions. She said they were "poorly attended."

Several board members disagreed on whose responsibility it was to find cuts to the budget. Some members said the board does not know the day-to-day expenses required of each office while others said it is the board members' duty to find cuts from the county executive's draft budget proposal that is released each August.

Other board members said the cash reserves on hand were more than the policy requires, so using the reserves made sense.

The approved resolution noted the county has about $94.8 million in cash reserves, which is about a $22 million surplus.

"That's tens of millions of dollars of taxpayer money that we're holding onto," board member Frankie Pretzel, a New Lenox Republican, said. "It would be super irresponsible for us to go back (to taxpayers) for more."

Board member Dan Butler, a Frankfort Republican, said addressing the budget gap with cash reserves is one of the "most responsible actions this body can take."

Karen Hennessy, director of the county's Finance Department, said using cash reserves for an identifiable, planned one-time use is considered a good business practice, but it is not a good plan to cover operational expenses. She said the county is lucky to have an excess in reserves, so this action should not harm the county. But she cautioned it's not a practice that should be done regularly.

The county built up its reserves largely due to $50 million in federal grant funds as part of an economic stimulus bill passed by Congress during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"That is the only reason we have excess," Hennessy said. "We've been using it over the last few years. It's not going to continue because we're not going to have an influx like that again."

The reserves act like a checking account and pays for employee payroll, vendors and other expenditures because revenue, such as property taxes, comes in only during certain times of the year.

"By choosing to tap into reserves to fill a deficit they created, the County Board is acknowledging the reality that there are no easy cuts to be found in this budget," County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant said. "While this action will fill the shortfall, it would be reckless to rely on reserves to maintain county services in the future."

Bertino-Tarrant said she was concerned that relying on reserves to fill budget holes will put the county's bond rating at risk.

Jim Richmond, the board's Republican Leader from Mokena, said the budget contains spending that will improve the county and its infrastructure that would be considered positive investments from a bond perspective.

Ortiz, whose microphone was once cut off after being warned she wasn't speaking to the topic at hand, at one point shouted her remarks, saying the board wasn't advised to follow proper procedures last month when approving the budget with a 1.75% tax levy, when it was clear the direction was to hold the line on tax increases.

She said a subsequent memo released by the executive's office warning employees about a potential government shutdown and seeing if any would be willing to work without pay was designed to "manufacture panic."

"This shortfall is tiny, is temporary and is easily covered with the reserves, but the real problem is the process," Ortiz said.

Sherry Williams, the board's Democratic leader from Crest Hill, said the board can be better and more responsible.

The county's portion of the tax bill is about 6%. Williams said the savings is not going to be noticed much on residents' bills and said the board has a responsibility to both save taxpayer money and provide services.

"One other thing that the public expects us to do, they expect us to stop this clown show," Williams said. "We are their representatives and they expect us to represent and to do it professionally. ... We can do better."

Michelle Mullins is a freelance reporter.

Woman gets 30 years in daughter's neglect death

By Meredith Colias-Pete
Post-Tribune

A Hobart woman got a 30-year prison sentence Thursday in a plea deal in the neglect death of her daughter.

Tiffany Jenkins, 34, pleaded guilty in September to neglect of a dependent resulting in death, a Level 1 felony.

Judge Salvador Vasquez rejected her first plea agreement in May for 20 years saying it was too lenient.

When Jenkins wept during that hearing, Vasquez said she failed the child.

"She should be crying," he said.

Police responded at 6:30 p.m. June 4, 2023, to the 600 block of Harvest Court in Crown Point for an unresponsive 2-year-old.

A toxicology report found Avia Jenkins had fentanyl in her system. An autopsy noted she had congested lungs with "foamy fluid" in her nose and mouth.

Paramedics tried to give the child naloxone to counteract the drugs.

Officers found the girl lying in a hallway. She didn't have a pulse and was "cold" to the touch.

Tiffany said she might have swallowed "mint extract," or something similar, the affidavit states.

The mother's DCS drug test was positive for drugs, including cocaine, THC and fentanyl. The case worker noted she was "mentioned" in 28 case files.

Post-Tribune archives contributed.

NOTICE OF SALE UNDER THE SELF FACILITY ACT.

Notice is hereby given that on **January 15th '2026,** Storage Coordinator for U-Haul Co. of Chicago South and South-West Suburbs, will be offering for sale under the Judicial Lien process, by public auction, the following units. The goods to be sold are generally described as household goods. The sales will be held online at **Lockerfox.com** and will launch one week prior to the above date. ALL sales will be closed and final on the above date at **8:30 AM.**

431 W. Pershing Rd, Chicago, IL 60609:
1143, 1147, 1234, 2406, 3061, 3404, 4022, 4077, 4215, 4247, 4301, 4310, 4415, 4739, 5338.

Federal prosecutors subpoena Evanston for video of clash between agents, public

By Richard Requena
Pioneer Press

Evanston police body camera footage depicts the tense scene on Oct. 31 as officers attempt to separate residents from U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents. CITY OF EVANSTON

A federal grand jury is investigating the chaos that ensued in Evanston after U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents detained three citizens after an Oct. 31 collision between the agents' SUV and a woman driving a red sedan, documents obtained in a records request show.

The city of Evanston received a subpoena from the U.S. Department of Justice on Nov. 4, ordering its Police Department to release vehicle accident reports, body camera video and any other recordings involving federal law enforcement officers and the public on Oct. 31. The subpoena also demanded that Evanston's police recordkeeper testify before a grand jury Nov. 19 at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse.

No charges have been filed.

The subpoena, signed by Assistant U.S. Attorney Shawn McCarthy, was addressed to the "Custodian of Records, Evanston Police Department," and ordered this person to appear in federal court. It also gave the person the option to submit the documents and video before that date, which Evanston police chose to do.

Just before 7:30 a.m. Nov. 6, Evanston police Sgt. Tom Giese emailed FBI Special Agent Chris Ryan to say that Evanston police Chief Schenita Stewart, Corporation Counsel Alexandra Ruggie and Giese would be driving down that day to FBI headquarters on Roosevelt Road in Chicago to turn over the documents in person, per the documents obtained through an open records request.

Grand juries operate in secrecy for the most part. In the Nov. 4 letter, McCarthy asked that the city not publicly disclose the subpoena because it could interfere with the investigation, but noted that they are not required to comply with his request.

A spokesperson for the U.S. attorney's office declined to comment on the grand jury proceedings. Likewise, Evanston officials declined to comment.

However, Evanston Mayor Daniel Biss, who is running for Congress in Illinois' 9th District, said the city has referred the investigation of the traffic crash and the detainments of the three citizens to the Illinois attorney general's office and the Illinois Accountability Commission.

Evanston also released, in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, body camera footage from a dozen police officers who responded to the crash and ensuing protest at Oakton Street and Asbury Avenue. A review of the records showed that officers were not at the scene to observe the federal agents detain three U.S. citizens, but arrived shortly thereafter.

At the scene Oct. 31, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection team lead told an Evanston police sergeant that federal agents in a Chevrolet Tahoe were attempting to evade a red Acura that had been tailing them.

The driver of the red Acura "hit us from behind with her car," the team leader told the sergeant.

Multiple witnesses of the crash told Evanston police that the agent driving the Tahoe slammed on their brakes to cause an accident. Biss has also made the same accusation. Federal agents detained the driver, along with another man whom agents beat and dragged on the pavement, and Evanston resident Jennifer Moriarty. Moriarty spoke about her experience in federal custody in an interview with Biss in November.

Moriarty told Pioneer Press Monday that neither the FBI nor any other federal government entity has contacted her since she was held in federal custody Oct. 31.

Northwestern Pritzker School of Law professor Paul Gowder told Pioneer Press that the subpoena is likely a fishing expedition for the federal government to seek evidence of its claims that protests against federal law enforcement agents are unruly, violent and cause for the National Guard to be called in.

Gowder said the feds have used their investigations to build a narrative that protesters are rioters, and at the same time, depict Illinois, Chicago and other municipalities as uninterested in helping federal agents.

A possible target of the investigation could be the detained citizens or local elected officials, he said.

A grand jury does not have to approve the government's charges, Gowder said, referring to a case in Washington where prosecutors failed to obtain a felony indictment against a man who was seen on camera hurling a sandwich at a federal law enforcement official, according to Associated Press.

"I expect, quite frankly, that ordinary people are going to see that this is overreach, and they're just not going to have it," he said.

NOTICE OF SALE UNDER THE SELF FACILITY ACT.

Notice is hereby given that on **January 27th '2026,** Storage Coordinator for U-Haul Co. of Chicago South and South-West Suburbs, will be offering for sale under the Judicial Lien process, by public auction, the following units. The goods to be sold are generally described as household goods. The sales will be held online at **Lockerfox.com** and will launch one week prior to the above date. ALL sales will be closed and final on the above date at **8:30 AM.**

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WILL COUNTY BOARD

One Dem candidate removed from ballot, another reinstated

By Michelle Mullins
Chicago Tribune

A Will County Electoral Board ruled 2-1 Wednesday that Homer Glen resident Kevin Koukol cannot appear on the ballot for County Board District 4 after he incorrectly listed the wrong district on his statement of candidacy. He is considering appealing that decision.

A Will County judge ruled Friday Bolingbrook candidate Tyler Giacalone should be reinstated to the ballot for County Board District 11 after an Electoral Board removed him last month.

Eight out of the 11 County Board districts, with two representatives each, are up for election next year. Challenges have been heard during the last month to see which names will appear on the primary ballots for a chance to run in November.

District 4

Three people filed to run in the March 17 Democratic primary for District 4, which includes Homer Glen, Mokena and portions of Lockport, New Lenox, Tinley Park and Orland Park. Voters select two candidates from the Republican and Democratic primaries who will vie for two seats in the November election.

Candidate Sheri Boniecki-Cooling challenged the petitions for Koukol and William Pratt. After a hearing last month, Pratt was found to have enough eligible signatures to appear on the primary ballot.

But the Electoral Board, made up of Will County Treasurer Tim Brophy, Circuit Court Clerk Andrea Lynn Chasteen and Assistant State's Attorney Scott Pyles, ruled that Koukol writing on his candidacy papers that he was running for District 6 instead of District 4 was enough of an error to be removed from the ballot.

The Will County clerk's office notified Mark Garwon, a former Homer Township trustee who was turning in the petition papers on Koukol's behalf, that Koukol wrote the wrong district on the papers. The papers had been notarized, and Garwon crossed off the 6 and wrote the correct district, 4, on the papers before submitting them.

Pyles said this goes "beyond a minor error" and candidates or their agents cannot change information at the clerk's office counter. He said he was bothered by the fact that someone other than the candidate altered the papers.

Chasteen said there was no indication Koukol was told about the corrections before they were made, and there was time for Koukol to make the proper corrections, get them notarized and turn in the petition papers the correct way.

Brophy was the only dissenter, saying he was thinking about the voters who signed the petition papers for Koukol.

Koukol's attorney Robert Windon said he disagreed with the Electoral Board's decision and believed the law was misapplied. Windon said the clerk's office knew what office Koukol was seeking and there was no voter confusion.

Koukol ran for Homer Glen trustee last spring.

Koukol said he plans to appeal the decision because he said he believes the petitions contained a minor error.

He has been adamantly against the Will County transportation department's plans to widen 143rd Street and wants to look into other county projects including roadwork and business, liquor and gaming licenses.

Boniecki-Cooling, a member of the Homer Township Democratic Organization, Illinois Democratic Women of Will County and Homer Township Open Space committee, said handling notarized documents properly is a serious issue.

"It's reassuring to see that clear irregularities weren't overlooked and that integrity in the process still matters," she said.

Boniecki-Cooling, who ran for the board seat four years ago, said she is a community advocate and not a career politician. She said she is running for smart growth and infrastructure improvements, environmental sustainability, open space preservation, fiscal transparency and responsible budgeting.

"I've always believed in showing up, speaking out and doing the work to make things better right here in Will County," she said.

The District 4 seat is now held by Republicans Steve Balich, of Homer Glen, and Jim Richmond, of Mokena, who are seeking reelection.

Gawron was part of the administration when Balich was Homer Township supervisor, and Balich notarized his letter to the Electoral Board explaining the error.

Balich and Richmond are challenged in the Republican primary by Homer Glen Trustee Michael Lepore and Pawel J. Tyrala, a part-time farmer and businessman.

District 11

Will County Judge Ben Braun ruled Friday an Electoral Board erred when it removed Giacalone from the Democratic primary ballot for District 11, which covers the Bolingbrook area, and ordered his name be printed.

Giacalone

Koukol

District 11 candidate Barbara Ann Parker, the DuPage Township clerk, challenged the petitions for Giacalone, the founder and president of Young Democrats of Will County, saying that he did not live in the district for at least a year before the primary and was ineligible to appear on the ballot.

The Electoral Board last month agreed with Parker and voted 2-1 to remove Giacalone from ballot.

Giacalone's attorney Burt Odelson said Friday everyone is in agreement the candidate moved to the district in June, so he will have lived there for more than a year before the Nov. 3 General Election.

Odelson argued the primary is where candidates are nominated to run in the November election, when they are actually chosen to their positions. The suggestion that election means primary election is an attempt to add language to the Counties Code and the Election Code, he said.

"Ballot access is always favored," Odelson said.

Joel Brown, Parker's attorney, argued the statement of candidacy is written in the present tense and the candidate swears he is in compliance with the office sought.

He said after the hearing he would have to talk with Parker to see if she wanted to appeal the decision to the Appellate Court.

Brown said it is the responsibility of the state legislature to update any election law language to make it clearer.

Giacalone, 28, said he is running to be the voice of the next generation and is enthused by the number of younger candidates, such as Lockport Township Supervisor Alex Zapien, who are seeking a County Board seat.

He said the County Board needs new leadership, citing the recent battles over the 2026 budget.

The Democratic primary for District 11 includes incumbent Jacqueline Traynere, a County Board member since 2008, and Sheldon Watts, a past candidate for Bolingbrook mayor.

The top two vote-getters in March will face Republican Steven Smith in November for two, two-year terms.

District 11 incumbent Elnalyn Costa, a Bolingbrook Democrat, is the only Will County board member not to seek reelection.

Michelle Mullins is a freelance reporter for the Daily Southtown.

Park Forest police Officer Tim Jones dies nearly a decade after shooting

By Jerry Shnay

Park Forest police Officer Timothy Jones, shot in the line of duty in March 2016, on his release from Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital in Wheaton on May 26, 2017. ZAK KOESKE/DAILY SOUTHTOWN

Tim Jones, a Park Forest police officer and the son of former Country Club Hills police Chief William Jones, died Wednesday, nearly 10 years after he was shot multiple times in a nearly deadly confrontation with an intruder in a vacant house.

Jones, then 24, and a member of the Police Department for less than one year, suffered bullet wounds to his head and neck during an exchange of gunfire in which the trespasser, Thurman Reynolds, was killed.

Jones survived after undergoing numerous surgeries before leaving a rehab facility more than one year after the shooting.

The announcement of his death was made in an online posting Thursday morning by Park Forest police Chief Brian Rzyski, who wrote that "while our hearts are broken we remain incredibly proud of the fight he gave."

Rzyski wrote funeral arrangements were not finalized but would be shared with the community when announced.

The saga of Tim Jones almost defies belief.

Almost immediately after the shooting, Jones was flown to Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn where he was put in a coma to relieve swelling on the brain, a condition for which doctors told the family that there was little or no hope.

William Jones said one doctor told them he had "never seen anyone wake up from something like this" and another opined that the odds of winning the Powerball were better than Tim living one more day.

Yet Tim Jones clung to life. Day by day, one operation after another, he gradually gained strength. After one more operation around Easter of that year, William Jones said his son's eyes were open.

"They were staring and blinking at me," he said.

Less than a week after the shooting, thousands of citizens and police officers jammed into a Matteson restaurant for a fundraiser for the family. For more than four hours, a long line ran from the front door to the street.

Perhaps more than 100 Tim Jones T-shirts, emblazoned with his badge number, 204, were sold in a show of community support.

The Police Department never lost sight of Jones.

In 2021, he was "promoted" to detective, and a Tim Jones street sign was hung from a light pole on a street adjacent to the Park Forest Police Department.

A police car with his badge number emblazoned on it is part of the fleet while his police locker and desk carry his name and badge number and are symbolic honors.

Jerry Shnay is a freelance columnist for the Daily Southtown.

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OBITUARIES

SISTER JOANN PERSCH 1934-2025

Nun once arrested during her years of service to immigrants

By Bob Goldsborough
Chicago Tribune

Sister Pat Murphy, center, and Sister Joann Persch, right, participate in a prayer service for immigrants outside the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement holding facility in Broadview on Dec. 6, 2024. Murphy died in July at age 96.
STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Sister JoAnn Persch was a nun who spent 18 years serving and praying with Chicago-area immigrants and refugees detained by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency at the Broadview processing facility, as part of a lifetime devoted to serving the less fortunate.

"She wanted to respond to the suffering of people and especially the immigrants who needed so much help," said Sister Rita Specht, a longtime friend and fellow Chicago-based Sisters of Mercy nun who joined Persch in praying for migrants at the ICE processing facility. "She was tenacious and was very committed."

Persch, 91, died of a thoracic aorta dissection on Nov. 14 at OSF Little Company of Mary Medical Center in Chicago, said Bob Keenan, a spokesman for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas order. Persch had been an Alsip resident.

Born in Milwaukee in 1934, Persch graduated from Mercy High School in Milwaukee and entered the Sisters of Mercy in Des Plaines shortly after she turned 18 in 1952. She earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from Chicago's St. Xavier College, and then earned a master's degree in religious education from Loyola University Chicago.

Persch took her perpetual vows, or final vows, with the Sisters of Mercy in 1958. She began her career by teaching in Catholic schools in Wisconsin and Chicago, including a three-year stint from 1959 until 1962 instructing pupils in Fox Point, Wisconsin, outside her hometown of Milwaukee. While there, she met a future partner in ministry to migrants and refugees, Sister Pat Murphy, who soon moved to Peru to become a missionary.

Persch later taught school in the Chicago area, and she reconnected with Murphy after Murphy moved back to Chicago from Peru in 1969. In the 1980s, the duo ministered at Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly. Both had been drawn to the Sisters of Mercy because of the order's responsiveness to the surrounding world, and they had a longstanding bond owing to their mutual deep call to justice, Persch told the Tribune earlier this year.

"It was amazing," Persch told the Tribune in January. "We were able to pick up where we left off. And we were able to do more of what we knew had to be done."

Long before the fairly recent wave of migrants into the U.S. followed by ongoing raids and deportations, Persch and Murphy felt called to serve those fleeing to the U.S., whether or not they arrived through traditional channels. In the late 1980s, Persch and Murphy opened Su Casa Catholic Worker House, a home in the South Side New City neighborhood for Central American survivors of war, torture and political persecution, where they served for the next seven years.

From 1997 until 2002, Persch and Murphy ministered together at Casa Notre Dame, a Chicago shelter for women fleeing domestic violence or recovering from addiction. Later, encouraged by a frustrated, faith-based immigration lawyer, the two began organizing weekly prayer vigils in January 2007 in west suburban Broadview, outside the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement processing center — where migrants and immigrants were sent before being deported. They also fought for better conditions for those who were sent to another ICE processing center at the McHenry County Jail, where some detainees were placed in solitary confinement.

"It was her commitment that got me involved in immigration ministry as well," Specht said. "That's the influence that her passion and her commitment had on me."

From the outset, Persch and Murphy found themselves frustrated that they and other faith leaders were not allowed to provide spiritual care to people facing deportation inside the Broadview center. They prayed with families outside the building, but weren't able to offer clergy visits.

"There have been suicides," Persch told the Tribune in 2008, referring to detainees. "People are very distressed."

Persch and Murphy pushed for state legislators to make a change. Passed unanimously in the Illinois House and Senate in November 2008, the Access to Religious Ministry Act of 2008 paved the way for religious workers to have reasonable access to meet with detainees in local facilities.

"The immigrant detainees are different than the criminal detainees," Persch told the Tribune in 2009, the year that the law became effective. "They most likely are never going to see their families (in the States) again. They're going back to places that they don't know. ... They're afraid. They're very sad for their family, very worried about their family. It's like in an emergency room when they bring a chaplain in. There's nothing you can do, but your presence, your compassion, your prayer, that brings comfort to them."

Persch and Murphy appeared in a 2012 documentary, "Band of Sisters," about their efforts to bring the Access to Religious Ministry Act into being.

The pair continued their efforts. In the late 2010s, they went several times to Washington, D.C., to protest, including for the Catholic Day of Action for Dreamers in 2018, and the Catholic Day of Action for Immigrant Children in 2019. They were arrested during a nonviolent civil disobedient protest during that 2018 visit to D.C., as well as for protesting at a nuclear test site in Nevada.

Persch and Murphy wound up appearing on comedian and political commentator Samantha Bee's TV show "Full Frontal" in 2021 to discuss the experience.

"This is exactly what we were doing when we were arrested. We were singing and praying the rosary," Persch told the Tribune in 2019. "We just know in our heart that this is what we have to do. These last two times, it was filling God's call to us to do something more. ... How could we say no? After being arrested, we were taken by a bus to a processing building. The little bit of discomfort we felt that day (from being arrested) is so minimal (compared to) what the immigrants go through there."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, clergy visits were barred, so Persch and Murphy began holding Zoom calls and online prayer sessions. After the pandemic, clergy visits resumed, and clad in jeans and sweatshirts, Persch and Murphy regularly could be found at the Broadview ICE facility. In 2022, they formed a nonprofit group called Catherine's Caring Cause, which helps asylum seekers settle in Chicago.

"Our goal now is to help (asylum-seeking families) get prepared for life under Trump," Persch told the Tribune in January. "We want to have parents put in writing who they'd like to have custody of their children if they are detained and sent away."

In July, Murphy died at age 96, surrounded by loved ones, at the Alsip apartment that Murphy and Persch shared. Persch continued advocating for migrants and appearing regularly at the ICE processing center in Broadview. On Nov. 1, she was part of a delegation of clergy leaders who attempted to bring communion to detainees in Broadview but were denied.

"She was on the rosary that we pray every week, some on Zoom and some in person," Specht recalled. "And she was on that rosary the day she died. She left the rosary early, and we were still having a discussion, and I said, 'Are you not feeling good?' and then she said, 'No, no, I'm preparing for a press conference.' She died with her boots on."

In a statement, U.S. Sen. Richard J. Durbin, D-Ill., called Persch's death "the end of a life of kindness and caring. But it is more. It is a reminder and a challenge to each of us to welcome the stranger and choose kindness over hate and fear."

In 2023, the Archdiocese of Chicago awarded Persch and Murphy the Cardinal Blase Cupich Lifetime Achievement Award.

There were no immediate survivors.

Services were held.

Bob Goldsborough is a freelance reporter.

Chicago Daily Tribune

ON DEC. 7 ...

In 1787, Delaware became the first state to ratify the Constitution.

In 1863 retailer R.W. Sears, co-founder of Sears, Roebuck & Co., was born in Stewartville, Minn.

In 1941 Japanese forces attacked American and British territories and possessions in the Pacific, including the home base of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

In 1972 America's last moon mission to date was launched as Apollo 17 blasted off from Cape Canaveral.

In 1993 a gunman opened fire on a Long Island Rail Road commuter train in New York, killing six people and wounding 17.

In 1995 a 746-pound probe from the Galileo spacecraft hurtled into Jupiter's atmosphere, sending back data to the mothership before it was presumably destroyed.

In 2004 Hamid Karzai was sworn in as Afghanistan's first popularly elected president.

In 2017 Minnesota Democrat Al Franken announced he would resign his U.S. Senate seat amid sexual misconduct allegations.

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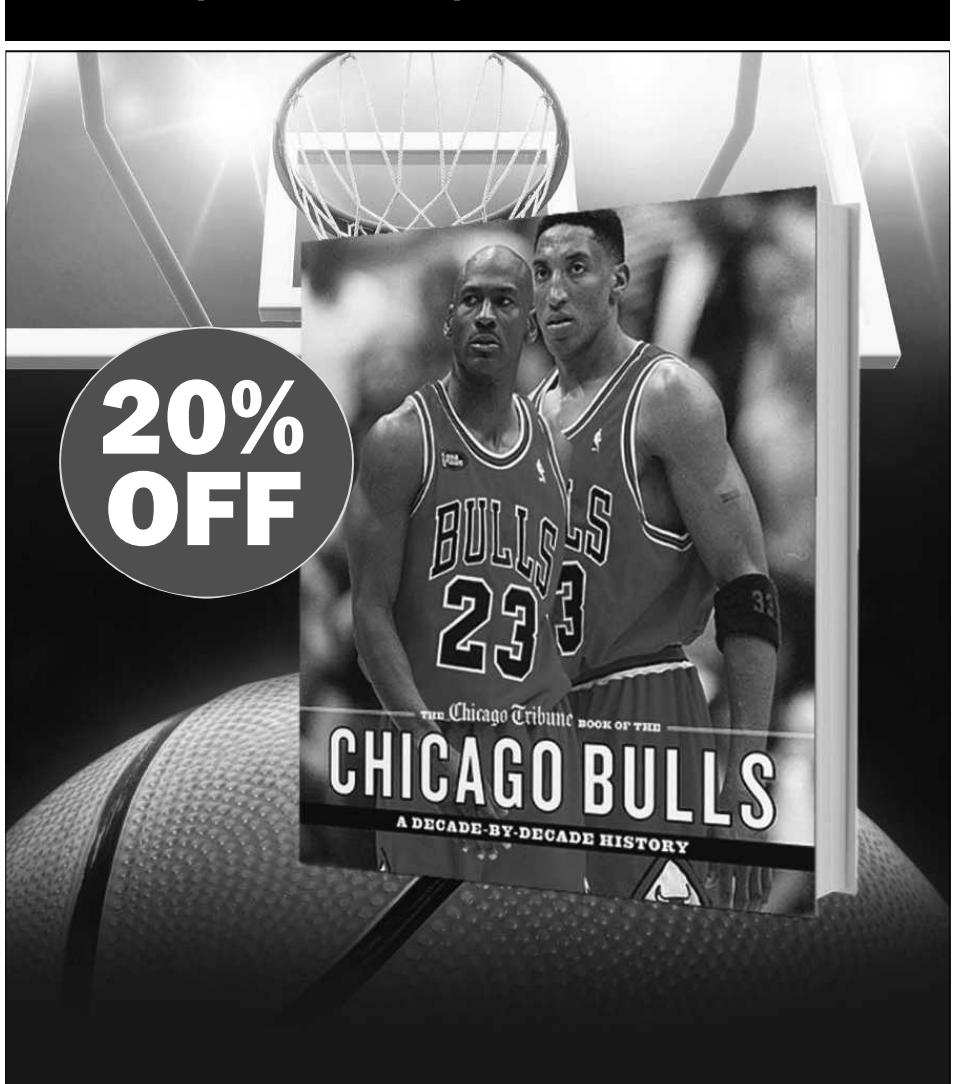

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In Memoriam

Doris E. Pilat
August 27, 1924 to December 10, 2022
Beloved Muz, Aunt and Grandma,
Our best memories of times together continue to remind us of your grit and your grace. We are grateful for all that we shared, and hold the values you left us—of faith, family and friends—deep in our hearts.
With love,
Your Devoted Family
Sign Guestbook at chicagotribune.com/obituaries

Death Notices

Aldrich, Kenneth L. 'Ken'
Kenneth Lee "Ken" Aldrich, age 83, a resident of Warrenville, IL since 2011, formerly of Columbus, OH, passed away unexpectedly on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at his home. He was born on September 11, 1942, in Chicago, IL.
Arrangements by Friedrich-Jones Funeral Home & Cremation Services, 44 S. Mill Street, Naperville, IL 60540.
For service times and a complete obituary, please visit www.friedrich-jones.com or call (630) 355-0213 for more information.

Friedrich Jones
Funeral Homes & Cremation Services

Barile Jr., Guy F.
Guy Barile, former Toledoan, director / actor passed away on November 29, 2025.

Guy came to Chicago in 1956 to attend the Goodman Drama School, (later called-DePaul University). He belonged to the Equity, Sag/Aftra Unions and was a professional actor for over 55 years.

Guy performed in or directed over 250 shows, working at most of the major theaters in Chicago. He was active in the world of industrials performing all over the world with clients like McDonald's for over 12 years.

Guy directed the original production of GREASE at Kingston Mines, in Chicago, and was one of four people who originated the Joseph Jefferson Awards.

In Minnesota, Guy is survived by his daughter, Melissa Vennelli, husband Lenny, their children, Laura, Katie, Adam, Ian; and great-grand children, Vivian and Vincent Burns.

In Toledo, he is survived by his sister, Patricia O'Connor, husband Jim; nieces: Michelle, Rose, Laura and Jackie; and nephews, Kevin and Sean.

Memorial services will be held Monday, January 26, 2026 at 1:00pm at The Sag Aftra Kaufherr, 1 E. Erie, Suite 650, Chicago, Il 60611.

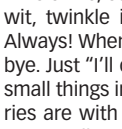
Chesler, Judd
Judd Chesler 79, of Evanston, Illinois passed away on December 1, 2025, surrounded by loved ones. Born on May 26, 1946, in Chicago. Judd was the child of Doris and Leonard Chesler. Judd grew up on Sheridan Road with his dear brother Mickel, his parents, and his grandmothers, Annie and Alma. Judd loved to play on the back lots of Rogers Park and go to the beach with his mom. Judd attended Gale Elementary School where he made lifelong friends and Sullivan High School where he liked to dance, the music of Bob Dylan, and cars. Judd went to the University of Illinois at Chicago and Northwestern University where he studied film. Judd got his first academic appointment at Purdue University where he met the love of his life, Kathryn (Kitty) Mross. Together, they moved back to Rogers Park and ultimately Evanston. Judd dedicated his career to the Department of Film and Video at Columbia College contributing to its significant growth. He served in many roles, including Graduate Program Director of Film and Video. The role he most cherished was being a mentor to students who became loyal friends to Judd and Kitty. In retirement, Judd led film discussions at the Vickers Theater in Three Oaks. Judd and Kitty enjoyed spending time with family, their rich social life, relaxing at their cottage near Lake Michigan, watching sports (the Bears!), and travel. Judd was a great Dad to his daughter Deborah. They spent many a day wandering Chicago museums, going to the beach, and getting ice cream. He was a cherished grandfather to William (Liam) and Adam who share his love of movies and sports. Judd is beloved by his wife of 42 years, Kathryn Mross, his daughter Deb (Mark) Moroney, his brother Mickel (Natalie Hilberg), his nephews David (Renee) and Daniel Chesler, and his grandsons Liam and Adam Moroney. He will be missed by his brothers in law, James Mross (Jill), Harry Shiparski, niece Jennifer Bartolotta, nephews Andrew, Chris (Betsie), James (Angela) Shiparski, Alex Mross (Karin), grandnieces and nephews Trevor (Estelle) and Ryan Chesler, Claire Shiparski Nelson (Brett), Anne, Katelyn, Harry, and Josie Shiparksi. He will be remembered by all who he touched through his passion, curiosity, depth of knowledge, and humor. A celebration of life will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, go see a movie. Support a local theater. Enjoy the show.
"Die my dear? Why that's the last thing I'll do." G.M.

WEINSTEIN & PISER
FUNERAL HOME

Chinn, Howard
Howard O. Chinn, age 99, of Morton Grove,

passed away peacefully on December 4th in the comfort of his home of more than 50 years. Howard was the beloved father of Carol, James, and Stanley; cherished grandfather of Tina, Denise, Tami, Noelle, Ashley, Tyler, and Travis; and treasured great-grandfather of Nathan, Chesney, Rachel, Haley, Ryan, Arianna, Angelina, Jonathan, Alyssa, Pasquale, Sebastian, Dylan, Anthony, Jackson, and Sydney. A visitation will be held on Monday, December 8, 2025 from 3:00 pm - 9:00 pm at **Countryside Funeral Home**, 950 S. Bartlett, Rd. Bartlett, IL 60103. Funeral Service and Military Honors will follow the next morning at 10:00 am at the Funeral Home. Interment Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Stickney, IL. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Howard's name to the American Cancer Society, Cancer Research Institute, 29 Broadway, Floor 4, New York, NY 10006-3111 or https://fundraise.cancerresearch.org/campaign/748882/donate or to a charity of your choice. For information, please contact **Countryside Funeral Home**, 630-289-7575 and www.countrysidefuneralhomes.com

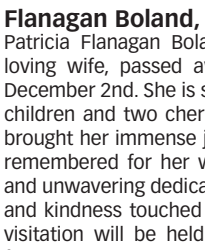
Diebold, Michael J. 'Mike'
Michael J. "Mike" Diebold, age 75, U.S. Army veteran,



a resident of Glen Ellyn, IL, formerly of Oak Park, IL and Elgin, IL, passed away, Thursday, November 20, 2025, at Alden Valley Ridge Rehab in Bloomingdale, IL. He was born on July 22, 1950, in Chicago, IL. **Arrangements by Friedrich-Jones Funeral Home & Cremation Services, 44 S. Mill Street, Naperville, IL 60540.** For a complete obituary, please visit www.friedrich-jones.com or call (630) 355-0213 for more information.

Friedrich Jones
Funeral Homes & Cremation Services

Eakins, William H.
William H. Eakins, 81, of Hinsdale, died peacefully in



his home on November 30, 2025, with his beloved wife Amelia (nee Lakawitch) and daughter Beth Reynolds at his side; He is survived by Loving wife of 51 years Amelia; Loving children Beth (Kieran) Reynolds, and the late Nancy Eakins Nasharr; Proud grandfather of Michaela (Gavin Jenkinson), Meghan Reynolds, Kieran John Reynolds, and Alexandra (Jack Bahr); Cherished great-grandfather of Noah and Luke Jenkinson, and Valerie and Zelda Bahr; Son of the late Anna and William Eakins; Dear brother of the late Robert, and the late Ruth Ann (Ron Naples); Fond uncle to many nieces and nephews. Bill was a Retired Oak Lawn Fire Fighter (29 years) and owner of American Health Foods in Oak Lawn for 56 years, where his customers loved him. His interest in history. He became an antique dealer as well. Bill and his family were originally from Oak Lawn, eventually moved to Hinsdale. Bill and family and beloved dogs loved time at summer house in Rosemary Beach, Bridgeman, Michigan. Bill loved Amelia and daughters Beth and Nancy completely, always striving to provide the best life for his family. Throughout his life his goal was to help others. Searching for best options for his customers in health foods field. Fond memories of travel and hunting and fishing with buddies. Remembering Bill's smile, sound of his beautiful voice, dry English wit, twinkle in his eyes when being mischievous. Always! When Bill left the house each day, no goodbye. Just "I'll call you from Heaven"! Remember the small things in life, that's what matters. Bill's memories are with us forever. So with broken hearts we say goodbye for now. "Waiting for your calls from Heaven"! Love Amelia, Beth, and Nancy, and all our puppies. Visitation Monday December 8 from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Chapel Service 5:00 p.m. at **Curley Funeral Home**, 6116 W. 111th St., Chicago Ridge; For Funeral info: (708) 422-2700 or www.curleyfuneralhome.com.

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Flanagan Boland, Patricia
Patricia Flanagan Boland, a devoted mother and loving wife, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, December 2nd. She is survived by her husband, two children and two cherished grandchildren, all who brought her immense joy and pride. Patricia will be remembered for her warmth, courage, generosity, and unwavering dedication to her children. Her love and kindness touched all who knew her. Memorial visitation will be held on Friday, December 12th, from 3pm to 8pm at Modell Funeral Home, 7710 S. Cass Ave in Darien. Donations can be made to Ronald McDonald house in Patricia's name at ronaldmcdonaldhouse.org/donate. For info 630-852-3595 or www.modelldarien.com

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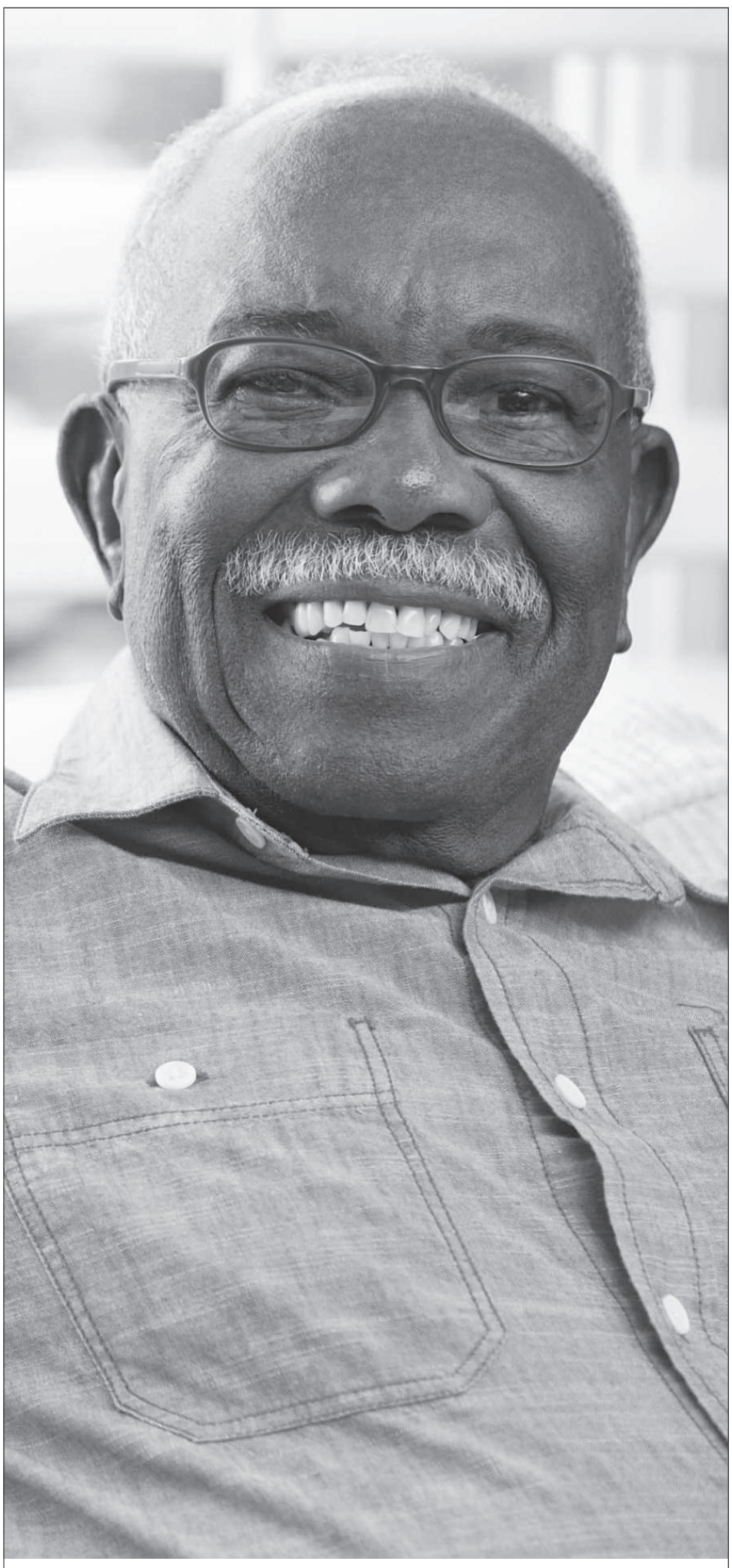
Chicago Tribune



Every life story deserves to be told.

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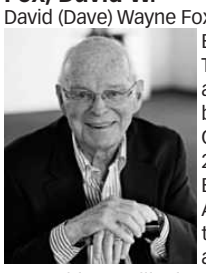
Chicago Tribune

Fox, David W.

David (Dave) Wayne Fox, retired Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Northern Trust Corporation, passed away peacefully, surrounded by family in Sea Island, Georgia on November 29, 2025, at the age of 94.



Born on August 29, 1931, in Aurora, Illinois, Dave was the son of the late Wayne and Helen (Lynch) Fox of West Chicago, Illinois. He touched the lives of many with his generosity of spirit, profound sense of humor, and steadfast commitment to his family and community. Dave graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1953 and earned his MBA from the University of Chicago in 1958. He served as an officer in the United States Marine Corps from 1953 to 1955 and continued his service in the Marine Corps Reserves until the 1970s, ultimately retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel after commanding two reserve squadrons for Marine Corps Air Stations: Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron (H&HS-48) and Marine Air Control Squadron (MACS-22).

Dave began his 40-year career at Northern Trust in 1955 where he met Mary ("Mike") Evans of Glen Ellyn, Illinois. They were married in 1956, raised a family with four children, and recently celebrated their anniversary of 69 years together. In 1972, the family moved to London, England, where Dave served as Senior Vice President and Manager of the Northern Trust branch, returning to the United States in 1975. His family looks back on those years in London as a memorable time of new experiences and travel together.

At Northern Trust, Dave rose through the ranks to become CEO in 1989 and Chairman in 1990. Under his leadership, the company expanded nationally, doubled its Florida office presence, and invested heavily in technology and strategic acquisitions. He was instrumental in opening the Canal Street operations center, which featured Chicago's first company-run child care center. He was known for his unwavering commitment to six guiding principles: delivering exceptional service, growing fee-based business, focusing on niche markets, preserving asset quality, maintaining a conservative balance sheet, and developing strong leadership.

Beyond his professional achievements, Dave was deeply committed to civic and philanthropic causes. He served on numerous boards, including the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, the Chicago Stock Exchange, USG Corporation, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, DePaul University, and the Adler Planetarium. He and his wife Mike established scholarships at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business for U.S. military veterans and at Notre Dame for undergraduates.

In Georgia, Dave and Mike were active supporters of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society and contributed to the Glynn County United Way. They were members of the Live Oak Society of the St. Simons Land Trust and supported its conservation efforts. They also contributed to the Golden Isles Arts and Humanities Association and were members of the Golden Isles Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America.

Dave was an avid tennis player and fisherman, known for his playful spirit and musical talent—often entertaining friends and family with humorous songs that he wrote. For the better part of 40 years, he treasured summers at the family's vacation home in Green Lake, Wisconsin, where Dave and Mike hosted joyful gatherings filled with laughter, music, and memories that spanned generations.

He is survived by his beloved wife Mary "Mike"; their children David Jr. (Alexandra), Kate (Ryan), and Tom (Jen); ten grandchildren Ben, Declan and Fox, Emma, Isabelle and Charlie, Fisher and Eli, Baker and Rae; and four great-grandchildren Willa, Skylar, Rosie and Liam. He was preceded in death by his eldest daughter Susan (formerly married to Matt), who passed away in 2012. Her memory remained a cherished part of his life, and he often spoke of her with deep love and pride.

Dave's legacy lives on in the lives he touched and the institutions he helped shape. On Friday April 10th, a Celebration of Life will be held at 11:00am at St. John of the Cross, Western Springs, Illinois, with reception to follow. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to Georgia Hospice Care. Arrangements are entrusted to Edo Miller and Sons Funeral Home www.edomillerandsons.com

Gardner, Marilyn Kathrene

Marilyn Kathrene Gardner, 90, of Naples, Florida, passed away peacefully on November 8, 2025. Born and raised in San Carlos, California, she grew up with a bright spirit and a gentle warmth that she carried throughout her life. While teaching children of American servicemen, she met the love of her life, Bill Gardner. They married overseas before relocating to the Chicagoland area to raise a family and build many cherished memories. Later, Marilyn and Bill embraced a sunny new chapter in Florida. We celebrate her life, her love, and the legacy of kindness she leaves behind. She will be missed deeply. Marilyn is preceded in death by her beloved husband of 60 years, Bill, their son Greg, and her brothers Alan and William Montgomery. She is survived by her children Jeff (Leigh), Allison (Adam Higdon), and Glen (Beth), and by her treasured grandchildren Blair, Madeline, Jake, and Olivia. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105. Her family will receive family and friends on Friday December 12th from 3pm – 6pm at Donnellan Family Funeral Home, 10045 Skokie Boulevard, Skokie, IL. A private family burial service at Memorial Park Cemetery in Skokie will be held on Saturday. Info: **donnellanfuneral.com** or 847-675-1990.

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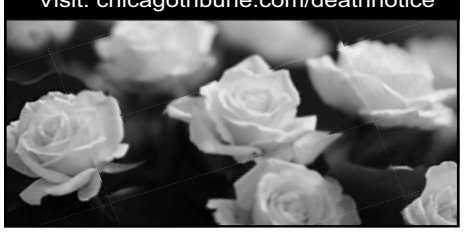
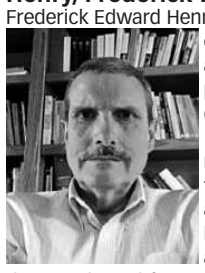


Henry, Frederick Edward (III)

Frederick Edward Henry III of Chicago, passed away on November 27, 2025 at the age of 78, following complications from whooping cough.



Fred married Vallie Henry née Jones, his wife of over fifty years, in 1969. They met at Duke University, where Fred earned his undergraduate degree, also in 1969. He then graduated from Duke Law School in 1972. His time in North Carolina instilled a lifelong passion for Duke basketball.

Fred built a distinguished legal career spanning several decades with Baker & McKenzie's Chicago office. He served as Managing Partner of the Chicago Office and Chair of the Chicago Tax Practice Group.

His position at Baker & McKenzie allowed Fred to travel the world. He had solo business trips to China and Puerto Rico, vacations with Vallie to Southeast Asia and Northern Italy, and extended family vacations in Spain and the UK.

Fred was also committed to his community. He served as President of the Old Town Triangle Association and as an Elder of Fourth Presbyterian Church.

Born in 1947 in Missouri, Fred was a proud St. Louis Cardinals fan. His baseball allegiance shifted after moving to Chicago, where he became an enthusiastic White Sox supporter—a change he attributed to his inability to root for the Cubs after being a Cardinals fan.

Fred was an avid gamer, from some of the earliest PC adventure games to the Civilization games of world conquest. He and Vallie maintained a monthly bridge night with friends for many years, and their bridge-playing continued well into retirement.

Fred is survived by his wife, Vallie Henry of Chicago; his brother, Barry Henry of Cathedral City, California; his son, Charles Frederick Henry (Natalia Blandon) of Las Vegas, Nevada; his daughter, Christine Henry Andresen (Carsten) of Austin, Texas; and his grandchildren, Truman, Sabine, and Ulysses Andresen.

A memorial service will be held at Fourth Presbyterian Church at a time to be announced later. In lieu of flowers, donations to Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago or the American Civil Liberties Union are appreciated. But the best way to honor Fred's memory is to stay current on vaccinations.

Hoffman, Roslyn

Roslyn Hoffman, née Braverman, loving mother of

Cynthia Swanson (David), Karen Hoffman (Dave Khuon), Elizabeth Hoffman, and Valerie Foxman (Michael) passed Nov 28, 2025. She was the grandmother of 4, with one great grandson. Roslyn retired as the Associate Vice Chancellor of the Univ of IL at Chicago in 2000. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa in mathematics from Queens College, NY and earned a Master's in Computer Information Systems from the University of Chicago. The family thanks Barbara Moskalewski for her decade-long caregiving. Funeral services were 12/2. Donations: Greater Chicago Food Depository, 4100 W. Ann Lurie Pl, Chicago, IL 60632 www.chicagosfoodbank.org. Arrangements by **Chicago Jewish Funerals** - Skokie Chapel, 847.229.8822, www.cjfinfo.com

CHICAGO JEWISH FUNERALS

Hoover, Eleanor Louise

Eleanor Louise Hoover, known also as Louise Ganja

Hoover, died peacefully on November 30, 2025 at the age of 84. She was a longtime resident of Wilmette, Illinois and most recently resided in Lincolnwood, Illinois. Louise was born in Chicago in 1941 to the late Nelson and Anna Ganja. Having studied at Illinois Wesleyan University and Roosevelt University, she taught for many years in the Chicago public school system. Louise was a caring wife to the late Allen J. Hoover, beloved sister to Ellen Ganja, loving mother to Allen E. (Susanne) and Annette (John) Hering, fond grandmother to Kari, Britt, James, and Avery, and devoted friend to many. Services will be private in accordance with her wishes. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests any donations be made to Misericordia Heart of Mercy.

Jennings, Jr., James J.

James J. Jennings, Jr., age 98, of Willowbrook, IL, passed away peacefully at home on November 24, 2025, surrounded by his family.

Jim is preceded in death by his parents James and Catherine (Conway). He is survived by his wife of 69 years, Mary Lou Shea of Oak Park, and their four children: Julie (Michael) Duquette of Warrenville, IL; Jay (Nina) Jennings of Rochester Hills, MI; Patrick (Lynn) Jennings of Mount Horeb, WI; and Paul Jennings of Bridgeport, IL.

Services will be held at St. Isaac Jogues Church in Hinsdale on Friday, December 12, 2025. Visitation will be from 10–11 am, followed by a Funeral Mass at 11 am.

To read the full obituary please visit http://www.dupagecremations.com/obituaries/

DUPAGE FUNERAL CHAPEL
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Kalanik Jr, John B.

John was a devoted husband, father, grandfather,

and friend, known for his love for his family, entrepreneurial spirit, and passion for sailing. John built a successful software engineering firm, InStep Software. John cherished family most of all, proudly raising his sons, Jack and Mike, in Chicago and recently celebrating the arrival of his granddaughter, Liv. John and Lynn built a beautiful life together throughout 37 years of marriage. Visitation on Monday, December 8, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at **Michalik Funeral Home**, 1056 West Chicago Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Funeral Mass on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at St. Josaphat Catholic Church at 10:30 a.m., 2311 N Southport Avenue, Chicago, IL. Information, 312-421-0936 or www.michalikfuneralhome.com.

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Chicago Tribune

Kaplan, Ellen

Ellen Kaplan, nee Chensky, age 94, loved, adored and married to Sol Kaplan for 76 years; loving mother of Larry (Mariette) Kaplan, Leslie Holz, and Steven (Jill) Kaplan; adored grandmother of Garrett Kaplan, Chelsea (Mike Perez) Kaplan, Morgan Kaplan, Bryce Kaplan, Ryan (Stephanie) Holz, Marnie Holz, Evan Kaplan, Paige (Alex) Randolph, and Courtney (Richie Woodham) Kaplan; proud great grandmother of Maddy, Emily, and Allie; devoted daughter of the late Reuben and the late Lena Chensky; cherished sister of Lois Platt and the late Florence Chensky and the late Bert (late Harriet) Chensky; treasured aunt and friend of many.

Ellen was a resident of Northbrook for 40 years and raised her family in Lincolnwood. She was the pillar of strength for our family. Ellen was a beauty, both inside and out. She met Sol when she was just 14 years old when they shared a geometry desk at Marshall High School. Romance soon followed. They were Marshall High School's Turnabout King and Queen, and married on Ellen's 18th birthday, January 16, 1949, at the Shoreland Hotel in Chicago. She will be so dearly missed.

Service Tuesday, 12 Noon CT at The Chapel, 8851 Skokie Blvd, Skokie (at Niles Center Rd.). Ellen's service will be livestreamed on her website at www.goldmanfuneralgroup.com. Interment Menorah Gardens Cemetery, Broadview. In lieu of flowers, donations would be appreciated to a charity of your choice. Info: The **Goldman Funeral Group** (847) 478-1600.

GOLDMAN FUNERAL GROUP

McDonaugh, Sr., Patrick Joseph

Patrick Joseph McDonaugh Sr, retired Chicago Police Captain, passed away peacefully on Thursday, December 4, 2025 at Covenant Living in Northbrook, Illinois. A native of Chicago, Patrick was born March 10, 1931 to the late John McDonagh and the late Eileen McDonagh, née Cawley. Patrick graduated from DePaul Academy and attended DePaul University before enlisting in the Navy and later serving in the Army during the Korean War. After the army, he joined the Chicago Police Department and rose to Assistant Deputy Superintendent rank during his forty-six year tenure before retiring as Captain in 2000. Patrick married his beloved, the late Mary Louise, née O'Connor, in 1958. Together they raised six children in Chicago (Edison Park), IL where Patrick became the self-proclaimed "Mayor of Ottawa Ave". As a child, Patrick loved to sing in the choir, play the tuba, ice skate, and play softball. Later in life Patrick loved to dance the jitterbug with MaryLou, play traditional handball with friends, and maintain meticulous care of his lawn and landscape. Remembering Patrick fondly are his children, Maureen (William) Harte, Patrick Jr., Kevin (Sophie), Kathleen (Mark) Wenc, and Brian (Maureen), and the late Terrence. Patrick was blessed with twelve grandchildren including Megan Altwasser, Patrick (Antonia) Altwasser, Terry (Miyuki) Harte, Daniel Harte, Patrick McDonaugh III, Anna (Enrique) De Anda, Alfred McDonaugh, Victoria McDonaugh, Adeline (Jonathan) Lavengco, Brianna (Hector) Salgado, John McDonaugh, and Jack McDonaugh. His great grandchildren include Conner Burkhardt, Memphis Kornstein, Ellie Harte, Alice Altwasser, and Emma Salgado. Patrick's extended family includes Alice (George) Heidkamp and the late Maureen (late Paul) Kerin, John (late Joan), Eileen (Sean) McDonagh. The family would like to extend our warmest thank you to Carolyn Manyo from Home Instead/Honor Care Agency. We are forever grateful and deeply touched by Carolyn's unconditional love, support, and care for Patrick over the years. Visitation Monday, December 8, 2025 from 3:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at **Ryan-Parke Funeral Home**, 120 S Northwest Highway, Park Ridge, IL 60068. Funeral Tuesday, December 9, 2025 from **Ryan-Parke Funeral Home** at 9:30 a.m. to Saint Juliana Parish, 7201 N Oketo Avenue, Chicago, IL 60631 for Mass at 10:00 a.m. Interment to follow at All Saints Catholic Cemetery & Mausoleums, Des Plaines, IL. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 262 Danny Thomas Place, Memphis, TN 38105 would be appreciated. For more information please visit ryan-parke.com or call (847) 823-1171.

RYAN-PARKE

McHugh, Edward Patrick

Edward P. McHugh,69, passed into the arms of Jesus on December 2, 2025. Blending faith, a tender heart and insight, with the science of psychotherapy (along with a dash of Irish humor) set Ed apart in his profession as a christian counselor. He left an enduring impact not only on those that knew him, but also those in the wake of the spirit he inspired. It was hard not to be drawn to Ed. He was a good and kind human being. Ed is survived by his wife, Gina McHugh (nee Gervase) and 7 siblings. Visitation Friday, Dec.19, 4-6. Service Saturday, Dec. 20, 11:00, lunch following. All at Western Springs Baptist Church, 4475 Wolf Rd.,Western Springs, IL.

Moscinski, Mary Frances

Mary Frances Moscinski, nee Stevens, 62, of Glenview, IL and Minocqua, WI, passed away surrounded by her loving family on December 2, 2025. She was the beloved wife for 34 years to Tim Moscinski; loving mother of Tom (Natalie) and Nikki Moscinski; and proud grandmother of Mia Moscinski. Mary dedicated 30 years of her career as a Civil Engineer with the MWRDGC, where her commitment and expertise made a lasting impact. Mary enjoyed going to concerts and loved the band Chicago. Mary's greatest joy was spending time with her family at their lake home up north in Minocqua, Wisconsin. Being there—surrounded by the people she loved most—brought her true happiness and peace. Mary will be dearly and profoundly missed by all who knew and loved her. Visitation will be held Monday, December 8 from 4 to 8 pm at **N.H. Scott & Hanekamp Funeral Home**, 1240 Waukegan Road, Glenview. Family and friends will meet for Funeral Mass on Tuesday, December 9 at 12:30 pm at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 1775 Grove St., Glenview. Interment Maryhill Cemetery, Niles. Funeral information 847-998-1020.

N.H. Scott & Hanekamp FUNERAL HOME

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Chicago Tribune

Mueller, Carolyn Jane

Carolyn Jane Mueller, known to all as Jane, passed away peacefully on November 24, 2025, at Westminster Place in Evanston at the age of 97. Jane was the daughter of Arthur and Gertrude Mueller. Her roots in the North Shore community ran deep. Her grandfather, Max Mueller, opened and operated the first dry goods/general store in Wilmette at the corner of Green Bay Road and Wilmette Avenue in the late 1800s. She was preceded in death by her parents and her beloved sister, Helen. A private memorial service will be held. Please view full obituary at Donnellanfuneral.com. Memorial contributions in honor of Jane may be made to the North Shore Senior Center, the Wilmette History Museum or a charity of one's personal choice. Info: donnellanfuneral.com or (847)675-1990.

Donnellan FAMILY FUNERAL SERVICES

Navicki, Stanley J. 'Nick'

Stanley J. ("Nick") Navicki, age 94, U.S. Navy Veteran, of Orland Park. Loving husband of Wanda, nee Kalinski. Dear father of Julie (Steve) Stewart, Nicole (Damon) Puracchio and Michelle (Ken) Williams. Caring Grandpa of Max, Grant and Colin Stewart, Nicholas, Brendan, Zack and Marissa Puracchio, and Tara (Ryan Landrey) and Eric McCarthy. Beloved brother of the late Agatha (the late Ed) Foley. Brother-in-law of Ed (Barbara) Kalinski. Also many loving nieces, nephews, relatives and friends. Funeral Tuesday, December 9, 9:45am from **RICHARD J. MODELL FUNERAL HOME & CREMATION SERVICES**; 12641 W. 143rd St, Homer Glen to St. Francis of Assisi Church. Mass 10:30am. Interment Private. Visitation Monday, December 8, 3:00pm to 8:00pm. Stan was a Sprinkler Fitter with Local 281 for almost 75 years. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to "Ryan Landrey's fight against cancer" via Zelle (708) 302-3497 (recipient appears as Michelle M McCarthy) or a charity of your choice. For further information, 708-301-3595 or rjmodellfh.com.

O'Brien, Jr., Edward F.

Edward F. O'Brien, Jr beloved husband of Patricia S. O'Brien nee Stack. Dear father of Edward F. (Julia) O'Brien, III and Todd M. O'Brien. Cherished grandfather of Megan R. and Mary M. O'Brien. He was preceded in death by his parents Edward F. and Helen nee Trumbull and a brother Robert E. O'Brien. Visitation Saturday, December 20th, 9:30 AM until Funeral Mass 10:30 AM at Holy Name Cathedral, 735 N. State Street, Chicago. Inurnment All Saints Cemetery, Des Plaines. In lieu of flowers memorials to Northwestern Memorial Hospital Foundation.

Rooney, Audrey M.

Audrey M. Rooney, 85, of Chicago passed away peacefully on December 2, 2025. Audrey was the wife of William J. Rooney Sr. for 58 years. She was the mother of Amy Rooney Kwit (Bill), William J Rooney Jr. (Tina) and Eugene John Rooney (Patricia) and was the grandmother of Tabitha, Alex, Abby, Ryan, Natalie, and Owen. Audrey was born in Sterling Illinois and was the daughter of Henry and Lillian Brown and the sister to Harold, Shirley, and David. She embraced the magic of her canine companions, finding joy in all the breeds. Private services will be held on a future date. Arrangements by Giancola Funeral & Cremation www.giancolafuneral.com 800.975.4321

GIANCOLA Funeral & Cremation, LLC

Skaljak, Mary

Mary Skaljak, devoted Aunt to Monica and Christine (Gregory Holliday) Santos, and beloved sister to Anne Santos (deceased), and sister-in-law to Billy Santos (deceased), passed away on 11.27, leaving her nieces with a void that can't be filled. Mary was born in Chicago in 1927 to Mary and Jon Skaljak. She attended Lowell Elementary and Austin High School and went on to have a 50-year career in the legal profession. Her last position of 27 years, was with the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission of the Illinois Supreme Court. Mary and her sister, Anne were best friends and were very close. They spent countless hours talking on the phone and never missed a weekend where they could get together and speak their native tongue, Slovak. Her nieces, Monica and Christine, will never forget her generosity, compassion, kindness and spirit of perseverance. She is with her sister now - may she rest in peace. A celebration of life visitation will be held Wednesday, December 10, 2025 from 9:15am until time of the Mass at 10 am at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 1775 Grove St., Glenview. Interment private at Queen of Heaven Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, C/O Sr. Paulanne's Needy, 1775 Grove St., Glenview, IL 60025. For extended obituary go to www.nhscotthanekamp.com.

N.H. Scott & Hanekamp FUNERAL HOME

Skarbek, Jr., John Stanley

John Stanley Skarbek, Jr., 77, of Frankfort, IL passed away on Dec. 3, 2025 at Rush Medical Center, Chicago. Born on April 25, 1948, in Chicago, IL, to the late John S. Skarbek, Sr. and Anne M. (Przybylski) Skarbek, John was a loving and amazing father to Jeannine Skarbek-Kubas, Valerie Skarbek, and David Skarbek, and a very special grandfather ("Poppy") to Alexia, Antonia, and Anasofia Kubas.

John was preceded in death by his Godmother Aunt Clara (Kai) Przybylski and nephew Scott Skarbek. He is survived by brothers Joseph Skarbek, Thomas (Susan) Skarbek, Robert (Laura) Skarbek, and many beloved nephews, nieces, family and friends. John focused his life on his beloved granddaughters, family and dogs. A Chicago Bears season ticket holder and White Sox fan, John's other loves included corvettes, model railroad trains, oldies tunes, James Bond, and award-winning Christmas decorating. John retired as a Store Manager from Jewel food stores after 46 years of service.

Family will receive friends at Kurtz Chapel, Frankfort IL on Mon. Dec. 8, 2025 from 3-8pm. Funeral service will be Tues. Dec. 9, 2025 - 9am prayers at Kurtz and 10am mass at St. Mary Catholic Church in Mokena, IL.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Frankfort, IL https://fssh.net/give

Every life story deserves to be told.

Share your loved one's story at placeanad.chicagotribune.com

Chicago Tribune

Skrzypek, Charlotte

Charlotte Skrzypek, nee Sobczyk, 93, passed away peacefully, surrounded by family on November 12, 2025. Loving wife of the late Ted (Lefty) Skrzypek, they enjoyed 67 blissful years together. Though an only child, she was embraced as a sister by her many cousins. A passion for sewing and crocheting led her to create stylish clothing for her family. She loved to cook and bake, passing these skills on to both children and grandchildren. Dancing to polkas and waltzes with Lefty was her favorite past time. Her genuine enthusiasm for connecting with people led to a fulfilling career in Human Resources. She was a loving and devoted mother of Linda Skrzypek, Mary (Ed) Jost, Marlene (George) Rennwanz, Andrew (Kim) Skrzypek, Elizabeth (Brian) Skrzypek-Gajewski, and cherished grandmother of Matthew, Elizabeth, Stephanie, Olivia, Ryan, Erin, Raifer and Jasper. Lastly, she was a friend to many and will be missed. Memorial services will be private. Arrangements entrusted to **Smith-Corcoran** Funeral Home. For info, 847-359-8020 or visit www.smithcorcoran.com.

Smith-Corcoran
Funeral Homes • Crematory • Funeral Planning

Spector, Barbara

Barbara Spector, nee White, age 96, of Buffalo Grove and raised her family in Skokie; beloved wife and best friend for 48 years of the late Irwin Spector; loving mother of Marla Spector and Mark (Julie) Spector; adored Baboo of Jarret Turbin, Nikki Turbin, Wyatt (Bari) Spector, and Avery Spector; devoted daughter of the late Isadore and the late Sylvia White; cherished sister of the late Armand White. Barbara's independence and incredible energy amazed all of us. Her strength, love, grace, and spirit will always stay with her family and everyone who knew her. She will be missed every day. Graveside service Tuesday, 1:30 p.m. CT at Westlawn Cemetery, Section Carnation, 7801 W. Montrose Ave., Norridge. Barbara's service will be livestreamed on her website at www.goldmanfuneralgroup.com. In lieu of flowers, donations would be appreciated to the Lurie Children's Hospital, www.luriechildrens.org. Info: The **Goldman Funeral Group** (847) 478-1600.

GOLDMAN
FUNERAL GROUP

Stack, Geraldine 'Jeri'

Geraldine "Jeri" Stack, went to Our Lord's Arms surrounded by the love of her children on December 2, 2025. She was born on July 10, 1939 in Chicago. Jeri is survived by her loving children, Michael Kamm, Elizabeth (Joseph) Hunter, Laura (Erik) Dunklau, and Linda Tafelsky; her cherished grandchildren, Justin (Heather) Kamm, Ryan (Adrienne) Kamm, Tyler Kamm, Ashley (Kyle) Wood, Nicholaus and Olivia Dunklau, Maximus, Marcus and Jack Tafelsky and great-grandchildren, KJ and Robbie Wood, Alexis Teasley. She was preceded in death by her first husband, Melvin J. Kamm and her recent husband, Hon. James F. Stack; her brother, Louis (the late Lynelle) Falcone. Visitation will be Tuesday, December 9, 9:30-10:30 AM at St. Dennis Catholic Church, Lockport. The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10:30 AM. Interment will follow at Queen of Heaven Cemetery, Hillside. **Overman-Jones Funeral Home & Cremation Services**, Plainfield, was entrusted with arrangements. For information please call 815/436-9221 or visit www.overman-jones.com for a complete obituary.

Friedrich Jones
Funeral Homes & Cremation Services

Thomas, John 'Jack'

John "Jack" Thomas, age 90, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family on September 21, 2025, in Tucson, Arizona.

Born on January 5, 1935, in Chicago, Illinois, Jack was the son of Mary C. Thomas (née Monahan) and Edwin Peppard of the Chicago Police Department, who passed away in 1935. He was later raised by his mother and stepfather, Frank V. Thomas.

Jack began his career at the advertising agency Leo Burnett, where he created commercials that showcased his creativity and technical skill. His professional path led him through various studios across the country, ultimately bringing him to Southern California where he contributed to movies and television productions. He was a proud member of the U.S. Marine Reserves.

Jack married Mary Ellen (Mellon) Thomas (née Wait), with whom he shared a life filled with love and adventure. Together they raised three children: daughters Terri Zak (Patrick) and Suzanne Wood (Patrick), and son Michael C. Thomas (Laura Susan). He is also remembered by his brother Michael F. Thomas (Michele Clair). He leaves five loving grandchildren: Emily Zak, Brianna Zak, Claire Bracey (Christian Bracey), Shannon Thomas and Ryan Thomas.

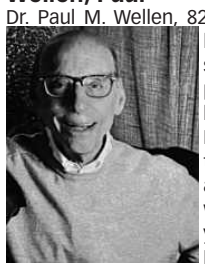
Jack lived in many places across the United States-beginning in Chicago and continuing through West Virginia, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, California, Oregon, and finally Arizona. His legacy is one of creativity, devotion, craftsmanship-and above all-a life well-lived. May his memory bring comfort to those who knew him. His full obituary may be found on www.legacy.com or contact **Drake and Son Funeral Home** at 773-561-6874 or www.drakeandsonfuneralhome.com.

Webster, Nancy

Beloved daughter of the late Bertha (nee Milos) and Clarence Webster. Cherished sister of Susie Webster; dearest cousin and dear friend loved by many near and far. Proud alumni of Little Flower Grammar School & High School and St. Dominic's College. Visitation Tuesday, December 9th, 3 -8 p.m. at the Palos- Gaidas Funeral Home 11028 Southwest Highway, Palos Hills. Funeral Wednesday, December 10th, 10 a.m. from the funeral home to Sacred Heart Church for 11 a.m. mass. Interment private. Express your thoughts and memories in the online guestbook at palosfh@comcast.net 708-974-4410

Palos-Gaidas
FUNERAL HOME

Wellen, Paul



Dr. Paul M. Wellen, 82, a Brooklyn, NY native and longtime Chicago resident since 1960, passed away peacefully following a brief battle with lung cancer. Paul dedicated 43 years to Roosevelt University as a Professor of Marketing, where he served for many years as Department Chair. He was widely admired as an educator, earning numerous accolades throughout his career, including a prestigious lifetime achievement award. Paul shared 55 wonderful years of marriage with his beloved wife, Lynne. Together they raised two sons, Robert (Rachel) and Michael (Kate), and were proud grandparents to Olivia, Lucy, and Henry. Known for his sharp wit and candid outlook on life, Paul was a cherished friend to many. He and Lynne shared a deep love of musical theatre and treasured their annual trips to Broadway. Paul will be remembered as a respected scholar, an engaging conversationalist, and a man whose intellect and humor left a lasting impression. He will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him.

WEINSTEIN & PISER
FUNERAL HOME

Wolff, Janice Judith

Janice Judith Wolff (Jurczyk) fell asleep on earth and awoke in heaven surrounded by her loving family and friends. Devoted and loving daughter of the late Edward and late Stella Jurczyk; Most beloved wife of Thomas; loving sister-in-law of Rick and Julie Wolff, Barb and Chuck Read, and Jerry and Barb Wolff; Loving Auntie of Christopher (Angela), Mathew (Jessica), and James (Nicole) Read, Kevin and JJ Wolff; Loving Grand Auntie to Isabella, Olivia, Eliana, Liam, Jerome and Noah Read; Loving Dog mom to Brandy, Penny and Harry who will be waiting for her at the Rainbow Bridge. Janice worked for the City of Chicago EDC and Department of Aviation for many years. Janice was a life long Chicago resident and active member of the Edgebrook Community Association. A very special thanks to our two angels Janina and Natalia for their love and care. In lieu of flowers, memorials in Janice's name can be made to Best Friends Animal Society at bestfriends.org.

Memorial visitation Saturday, December 13, 2025 from 9:30 am until time of Funeral Mass 10:30 am at St. Mary of the Woods Church 6955 N. Hiawatha Ave., Chicago. Arrangements entrusted to **Colonial-Wojciechowski Funeral Home**, Chicago. Info. 773-774-0366 or colonialfuneral.com

Colonial Wojciechowski

Every life story deserves to be told.

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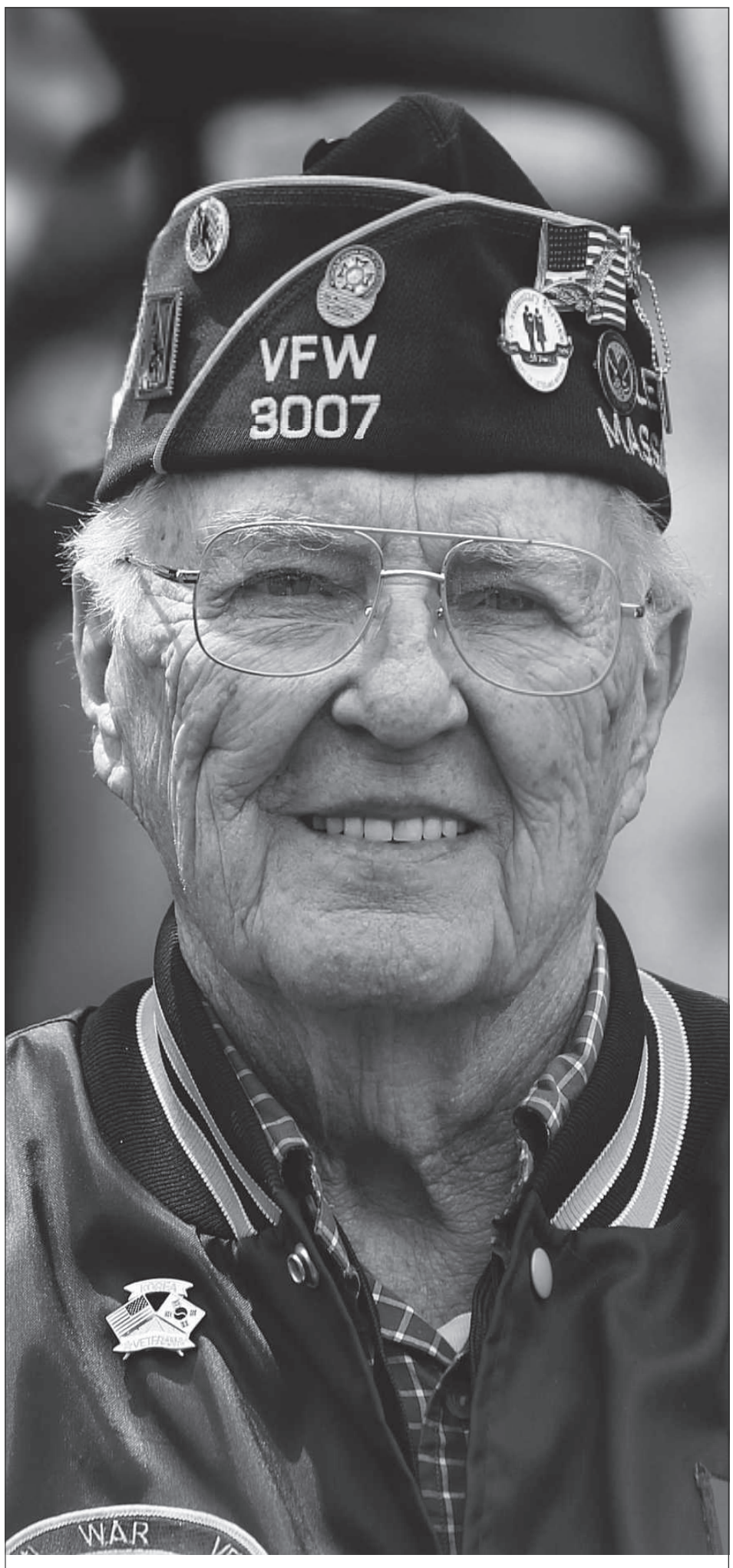
Chicago Tribune



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Chicago Tribune

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Chicago Tribune

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CHICAGO ACCUWEATHER

Meteorologists Larry Mowry, Cheryl Scott, Jaisol Martinez, Tracy Butler and Greg Dutra

ABC7 Outlook: Snow ends early in the morning. Temperatures in the upper 20s in the morning, but then in the low 20 by the afternoon. Lake-effect snow is possible in the evening.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Day / Night	Day / Night	Day / Night	Day / Night	Day / Night	Day / Night
High: 30 Low: 17	High: 24 Low: 20	High: 36 Low: 34	High: 37 Low: 20	High: 26 Low: 16	High: 19 Low: -5
Blowing snow; periods of snow this morning	Mostly cloudy and very cold	Mainly cloudy and breezy	A bit of a.m. snow; mainly cloudy, breezy	Cloudy and cold; a bit of afternoon snow	Mostly cloudy and colder; a p.m. flurry
POP: 75%	POP: 5%	POP: 25%	POP: 55%	POP: 60%	POP: 40%
Winds: N 10-20 mph	Winds: S 6-12 mph	Winds: SW 10-20 mph	Winds: WNW 10-20 mph	Winds: WSW 6-12 mph	Winds: W 8-16 mph

CHICAGO FORECAST

Sunday Conditions

	8 a.m.	10 a.m.	Noon	2 p.m.	4 p.m.	6 p.m.	8 p.m.
AccuWeather.com UV Index™	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
RealFeel Temperature®	13	14	7	6	2	1	1

Sunday Activities

	8 a.m.	10 a.m.	Noon	2 p.m.	4 p.m.	6 p.m.	8 p.m.
Outdoor Activities Index	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fishing Index	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The higher the **AccuWeather.com UV Index** number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection. **0-2** Low, **3-5** Moderate, **6-7** High, **8-10** Very High, **11+** Extreme. The patented **AccuWeather.com RealFeel Temperature** is an exclusive index of effective temperature based on eight weather factors. **Outdoor Activities and Fishing Indexes: 0-2**: Poor; **3-4**: Fair; **5-6**: Good; **7-8**: Very Good; **9-10**: Excellent.

CHICAGO ALMANAC

Saturday Temperatures

O'Hare through 4 p.m.

High	32
Low	26
Normal high	39
Normal low	27
Record high	65 (1980)
Record low	0 (2007)

Local Temperatures

through 6 p.m. Saturday

Location	Hi	Lo	Normal Hi	Normal Lo
Aurora	35	20	39	23
Gary	34	27	40	27
Kankakee	35	28	40	25
Lansing	32	25	40	25
Midway	32	28	41	28
Romeoville	34	25	40	25
Valparaiso	31	21	42	27
Waukegan	29	26	39	24

Saturday Precipitation

	2025	2024	Normal
Saturday*	0.00"	0.00"	0.08"
Month to date	0.16"	Trace	0.46"
Year to date	27.88"	32.81"	36.21"
Snowfall			
Saturday*	0.0"	0.0"	0.2"
Month to date	1.9"	0.2"	1.3"
Season to date	12.3"	3.1"	3.3"

*24-hour period ending 4 p.m. Saturday

Air Quality Index

Saturday's reading: **Moderate**

Sunday's forecast: **Moderate**

Primary pollutant: **Particulates**

Source: AirNow.gov

Sun and Moon

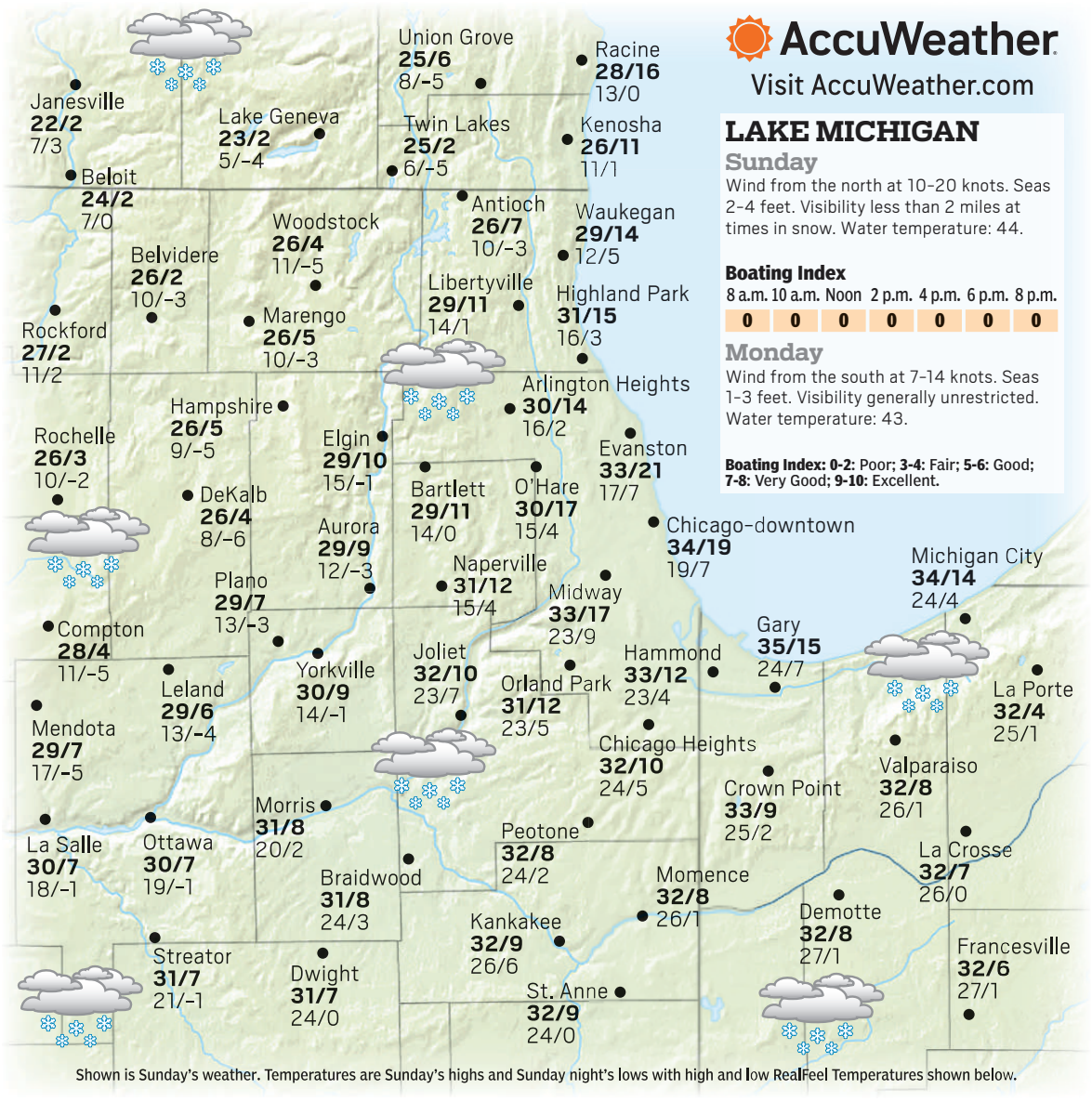
	Sun.	Mon.
Sunrise	7:05 a.m.	7:06 a.m.
Sunset	4:19 p.m.	4:19 p.m.
Moonrise	7:18 p.m.	8:35 p.m.
Moonset	10:07 a.m.	10:45 a.m.

Last	New	First	Full
Dec 11	Dec 19	Dec 27	Jan 3

Sunday's Planet Watch

	Rise	Set
Mercury	5:17 a.m.	3:18 p.m.
Venus	6:30 a.m.	3:53 p.m.
Mars	7:49 a.m.	4:48 p.m.
Jupiter	7:03 p.m.	9:55 a.m.
Saturn	12:44 p.m.	12:21 a.m.

Best viewing times today: Venus: 6:50 a.m. Mars: not visible Jupiter: 9:15 p.m. Saturn: 9:15 p.m. Mercury: 6:50 a.m.



Shown is Sunday's weather. Temperatures are Sunday's highs and Sunday night's lows with high and low RealFeel Temperatures shown below.

AccuWeather

Visit AccuWeather.com

LAKE MICHIGAN

Sunday

Wind from the north at 10-20 knots. Seas 2-4 feet. Visibility less than 2 miles at times in snow. Water temperature: 44.

Boating Index

8 a.m.	10 a.m.	Noon	2 p.m.	4 p.m.	6 p.m.	8 p.m.
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Monday

Wind from the south at 7-14 knots. Seas 1-3 feet. Visibility generally unrestricted. Water temperature: 43.

Boating Index: 0-2: Poor; **3-4**: Fair; **5-6**: Good; **7-8**: Very Good; **9-10**: Excellent.

ASK abc7

Jaisol Martinez

QUESTION: What were temperatures like the second week of December last year?

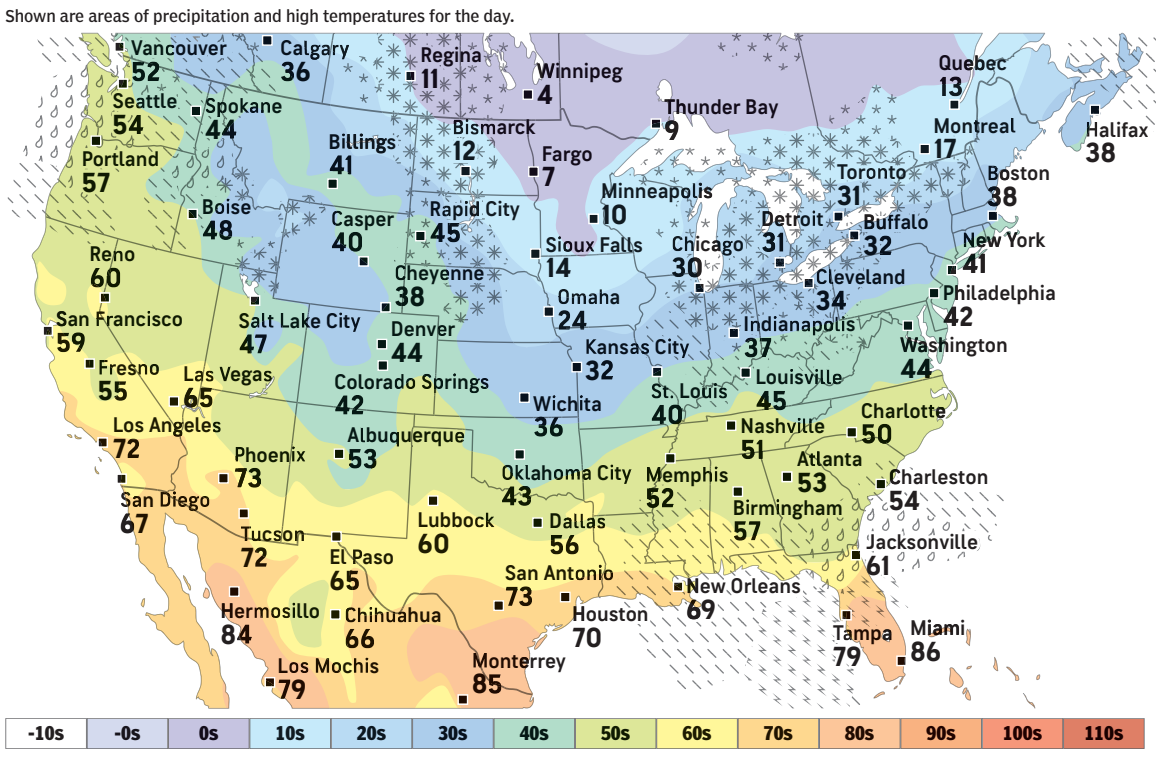
ANSWER: Dec. 8 through Dec. 14 of 2024 had fluctuating temperatures. Dec. 8 had a high of 55 degrees and Dec. 9 was also mild with a high of 53 degrees. Highs dropped into the low 40 on Dec. 10, 2024, and down to freezing on Dec. 11, 2024. Morning temperatures were in the single digits Dec. 12 and Dec. 13, 2024, and highs were only in the teens on Dec. 12, 2024, and in the mid- to upper 20s on Dec. 13, 2024. Highs were back in the upper on Dec. 14, 2024.

Do you have a weather question for the ABC 7 team? Submit them at **abc7chicago.com/weather** or send them to:

Ask ABC 7 Weather Team
190 N. State Street
Chicago, IL 60601

NATIONAL FORECAST

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for the day.



REGIONAL CITIES

City	Sun. Hi/Lo/W	Mon. Hi/Lo/W
Illinois		
Carbondale	45/26/sh	36/25/s
Champaign	34/14/sn	26/20/pc
Decatur	35/16/sf	27/23/pc
Moline	29/1/c	27/20/c
Peoria	33/9/sn	26/21/pc
Quincy	34/12/c	31/25/pc
Rockford	27/2/sn	22/16/c
Springfield	35/14/c	29/23/pc
Sterling	26/1/sn	24/18/c
Indiana		
Bloomington	41/21/c	31/23/pc
Evansville	45/27/sh	36/27/s
Fort Wayne	34/6/sn	22/12/pc
Indianapolis	37/18/sn	27/22/pc
Lafayette	34/10/sn	23/15/pc
South Bend	32/5/sn	23/12/pc
Wisconsin		
Green Bay	19/-3/sn	22/19/sn
Kenosha	26/11/sn	24/17/sf
La Crosse	14/0/pc	23/18/sn
Madison	20/-1/c	23/18/c
Milwaukee	26/14/sn	26/20/c
Wausau	17/-3/pc	20/16/sn
Michigan		
Detroit	31/15/sn	28/19/pc
Grand Rapids	29/8/sn	20/13/pc
Marquette	13/2/c	19/16/sn
Sault Ste. Marie	20/3/sf	24/18/sn
Traverse City	25/15/sn	26/19/c
Iowa		
Ames	18/4/c	26/22/c
Cedar Rapids	21/0/c	24/20/sf
Des Moines	22/7/c	30/25/c
Dubuque	22/-1/c	21/16/sf

NATIONAL CITIES

City	Sun. Hi/Lo/W	Mon. Hi/Lo/W
Abilene	60/31/s	62/42/s
Albany, NY	34/16/c	22/5/s
Albuquerque	53/30/s	55/31/s
Amarillo	54/28/s	58/31/s
Anchorage	16/10/s	18/8/s
Asheville	51/37/pc	43/29/sh
Aspen	31/12/pc	35/13/c
Atlanta	53/44/pc	52/35/pc
Atlantic City	44/30/pc	34/24/pc
Austin	68/39/s	61/33/s
Baltimore	43/31/pc	36/15/pc
Billings	41/34/c	45/39/c
Birmingham	57/43/c	51/33/pc
Bismarck	12/10/sn	37/28/pc
Boise	48/38/pc	53/45/c
Boston	38/23/pc	27/16/s
Brownsville	86/55/pc	68/51/s
Buffalo	32/12/sn	22/10/pc
Burlington, VT	24/12/sn	18/5/s
Charleston, SC	54/45/r	54/33/sh
Charleston, WV	46/29/r	33/21/pc
Charlotte	50/39/pc	48/26/sh
Chattanooga	53/43/c	52/30/c
Cheyenne	38/30/s	43/36/pc
Cincinnati	40/23/sn	30/23/pc
Cleveland	34/24/sn	30/18/pc
Colorado Spgs	42/25/s	50/33/s
Columbia, MO	36/20/c	35/28/pc
Columbia, SC	52/41/pc	50/30/pc
Columbus, OH	37/23/sn	30/20/pc
Concord	34/16/pc	24/2/s
Corpus Christi	81/45/pc	68/47/s
Dallas	56/34/pc	54/38/s
Daytona Beach	74/62/t	70/54/c
Denver	44/30/s	51/36/s
Duluth	9/-3/s	17/12/sn
El Paso	65/36/s	67/39/s
Fairbanks	-15/-25/s	-16/-23/s
Fargo	7/5/pc	25/14/sn
Flagstaff	53/21/s	53/20/s
Fort Myers	83/71/c	79/60/t
Fort Smith	53/32/pc	49/30/pc
Fresno	55/41/pc	56/44/pc
Grand Junction	44/28/s	44/27/pc
Great Falls	42/37/pc	44/40/c
Harrisburg	40/27/c	32/12/pc
Hartford	38/22/c	26/7/s
Helena, MT	42/36/pc	47/41/c
Honolulu	83/71/pc	84/69/s
Houston	70/46/pc	59/41/s
Int'l Falls	7/-8/pc	16/7/sn
Jackson, MS	63/45/sh	54/31/pc
Jacksonville	61/54/r	63/43/c
Juneau	31/14/sn	18/5/c
Kansas City	32/18/c	40/32/pc
Las Vegas	65/45/s	68/45/s
Lexington	45/28/pc	34/25/sf
Lincoln	27/18/c	44/28/pc
Little Rock	56/36/pc	48/31/pc
Los Angeles	72/51/s	77/56/s
Louisville	45/29/c	34/27/s
Macon	55/44/c	60/37/c
Memphis	52/35/pc	44/32/pc
Miami	86/71/c	82/67/t
Minneapolis	10/5/pc	22/18/sn
Mobile	66/49/c	59/37/pc
Montgomery	59/46/pc	58/34/pc
Nashville	51/38/pc	42/29/pc
New Orleans	69/52/sh	60/44/s
New York City	41/27/pc	31/19/pc
Norfolk	50/38/c	44/31/sn
Oklahoma City	43/24/pc	51/33/pc
Omaha	24/16/c	37/28/c
Orlando	82/65/t	73/54/sh
Palm Beach	86/71/c	81/67/t
Palm Springs	77/53/s	81/56/s
Philadelphia	42/30/c	33/18/pc
Phoenix	73/48/s	75/49/s
Pittsburgh	37/21/sf	28/15/pc
Portland, ME	34/17/pc	23/4/s
Portland, OR	57/50/r	57/48/r
Providence	40/25/pc	30/12/s
Raleigh	50/36/pc	43/22/sn
Rapid City	45/27/s	53/36/s
Reno	60/29/pc	60/32/c
Richmond	46/34/pc	39/20/pc
Rochester	33/15/sn	22/10/pc
Sacramento	57/41/pc	55/41/pc
St. Louis	40/21/sh	35/29/pc
Salem, OR	57/52/r	58/49/r
Salt Lake City	47/37/pc	51/39/pc
San Antonio	73/41/s	66/39/s
San Diego	67/48/s	73/51/pc
San Francisco	59/48/pc	59/50/pc
San Juan	87/74/sh	88/75/s
Santa Fe	45/25/s	50/24/s
Savannah	55/48/r	57/34/sh
Seattle	54/48/r	57/48/r
Shreveport	61/38/c	54/35/s
Sioux Falls	14/11/sn	33/26/c
Spokane	44/39/r	48/40/r
Syracuse	35/10/sn	20/2/pc
Tallahassee	62/55/r	64/42/sh
Tampa	79/68/t	75/55/t
Topeka	34/20/c	45/31/pc
Tucson	72/40/s	75/43/s
Tulsa	42/25/pc	48/34/c
Washington, DC	44/33/pc	36/21/pc
Wichita	36/22/c	47/30/pc
Wilkes-Barre	38/22/c	28/7/pc
Yuma	75/49/s	78/53/s

WORLD CITIES

City	Sun. Hi/Lo/W	Mon. Hi/Lo/W
Acapulco	89/73/pc	89/74/t
Algiers	70/45/s	69/46/s
Amsterdam	55/50/r	56/52/c
Ankara	51/40/c	50/35/pc
Athens	64/53/pc	62/52/s
Auckland	79/60/s	79/62/s
Baghdad	81/61/c	71/57/t
Bangkok	91/73/pc	88/70/pc
Barbados	87/78/pc	86/77/sh
Barcelona	65/47/c	64/45/s
Beijing	51/21/pc	42/20/pc
Beirut	72/60/pc	70/59/c
Berlin	48/42/pc	55/48/pc
Bermuda	71/65/pc	69/63/r
Bogota	66/46/r	66/46/r
Brussels	58/51/r	57/52/r
Bucharest	43/39/r	44/36/pc
Budapest	49/36/r	46/37/c
Buenos Aires	77/68/pc	76/68/c
Cairo	70/56/s	70/58/pc
Cancun	87/70/sh	84/70/r
Caracas	88/75/r	88/75/t
Casablanca	71/41/pc	73/42/s
Copenhagen	46/43/sh	50/44/c
Dublin	53/45/r	53/49/pc
Edmonton	16/5/pc	23/2/sn
Frankfurt	51/48/r	58/46/c
Geneva	49/45/sh	54/40/c
Guadalajara	76/52/c	76/55/t
Havana	88/71/pc	84/69/t
Helsinki	40/34/r	40/38/c
Hong Kong	75/67/pc	78/66/pc
Istanbul	56/47/sh	51/47/sh
Jerusalem	59/42/pc	58/44/pc
Johannesburg	78/56/t	77/57/t
Kabul	55/37/pc	55/39/pc
Kingston	89/76/s	88/75/c
Kyiv	38/29/c	34/30/pc
Lima	71/64/c	71/63/c
Lisbon	63/54/sh	64/58/c
London	59/50/r	56/53/r
Madrid	58/41/pc	54/36/c
Manila	83/75/r	88/77/r
Mexico City	74/52/pc	66/47/sh
Monterrey	85/49/pc	70/46/s
Montreal	17/6/sn	13/8/s
Moscow	34/30/c	32/30/c
Munich	48/43/r	57/39/pc
Nairobi	79/60/pc	79/60/pc
Nassau	83/72/s	84/72/c
New Delhi	72/52/pc	74/52/pc
Oslo	40/37/c	43/34/r
Ottawa	15/1/sn	12/4/s
Panama City	87/72/pc	87/73/sh
Paris	60/55/r	59/49/r
Prague	46/40/pc	54/46/c
Rio de Janeiro	84/73/pc	85/74/pc
Riyadh	77/61/pc	79/61/pc
Rome	62/40/c	60/39/s
Santiago	83/57/t	91/57/s
Seoul	55/30/pc	43/20/s
Singapore	87/76/sh	87/76/pc
Sofia	46/39/pc	49/32/pc
Stockholm	42/38/r	43/39/r
Sydney	69/64/c	80/68/sh
Taipei	81/63/s	74/65/r
Tehran	61/47/pc	56/40/r
Tokyo	58/44/s	64/47/s
Toronto	31/11/sn	21/15/s
Trinidad	84/77/sh	86/76/r
Vancouver	52/44/r	52/42/r
Vienna	47/39/c	46/38/sh
Warsaw	44/37/c	48/44/c
Winnipeg	4/1/pc	16/7/sn

Weather(W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice. **POP:** Probability of Precipitation.

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OPINION

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EDITORIALS

Johnson's game of budgetary chicken puts Chicago's future at risk

Buckle up, Chicago. Mayor Brandon Johnson is running the Hail Mary play, both for Chicago's finances and his political future.

The mayor's lengthy response on Thursday to an alternative budget framework put forth by 26 aldermen last week was an exercise in political irresponsibility. The mayor's team dismissed virtually all of the suggestions the majority of the council made and came back with almost no alternative proposals of their own. And the mayor's cheering section, the Chicago Teachers Union, decided, appallingly, to engage in the politics of personal destruction naming "The Alders willing to shutdown our city," suggesting they will provide backup if Johnson digs in sufficiently for Chicago's own version of a federal government shutdown. Be very afraid of that.

If nothing else, this budget season has exposed as fiction the mayor's repeated claim of being more collaborative than his predecessors when it comes to relations with the City Council. In the past, Johnson's "collaboration," such as it's been, has been born of necessity as much as anything else — a consequence of a divisive brand of politics that has sapped aldermanic confidence in his leadership. It's not surprising that any pretense to give-and-take is on the shelf now that we're fast approaching election season in Chicago.

But it is dismaying. And, if you care about Chicago's future, very worrying.

Long after a majority of alders made it clear they wouldn't support reviving the city's corporate head tax, Johnson's insistence on a monthly $21 tax on each worker at businesses employing 100 or more is beginning to put Chicago in truly perilous territory when it comes to its finances.

Team Johnson estimates that tax would generate $100 million; the city's budget gap is $1.2 billion. A head tax would crush whatever remaining confidence companies and investors have in Chicago as a healthy place to do business. There are clear alternatives to that much-despised levy, but we're not in the realm of logic and practicality anymore.

Johnson clearly wants desperately to stand for reelection having made the "rich" pay more in taxes to bankroll his agenda. That goal is what has animated his mayoralty from the start, and he's obviously been frustrated at his inability to convince Springfield lawmakers, the business community and even ordinary Chicago voters to endorse more levies on a business sector that already is heavily taxed.

Now, it's the City Council's turn. And they're not buying what the mayor is selling either.

As a result, the first week of December is nearing its close and Johnson has only brinksmanship on offer. It would be one thing if all that was at stake was his future political standing. But he's holding Chicago itself hostage over an ideological demand that at the end of the day isn't critical to balancing the budget.

What do we mean by "holding Chicago hostage"? The agencies that determine the city's credit rating — Standard & Poor's, Moody's and the like — are watching this process just like us journalists and other interested observers. Those agencies, in determining how much of a risk the city's bonds are for investors, will consider not just the details of the final budget product for 2026 but how the council and mayor arrived at it.

In short, the stability of Chicago's governance is a factor in these ratings as well. And right now Chicago simply isn't a good bet on that score if you're an investor, whether in the city's bonds, a real estate project or a new restaurant. Chicago's credit rating currently is a scant (and wobbly) two notches above junk status.

So Johnson at this stage truly is playing with fire. If he continues on this course — threatening budget vetoes, summarily dismissing potentially viable cost-cutting or revenue ideas — soon there will be open discussion of precisely what happens if the budget isn't passed by the Dec. 31 deadline. That's never happened in this city's long history. Never.

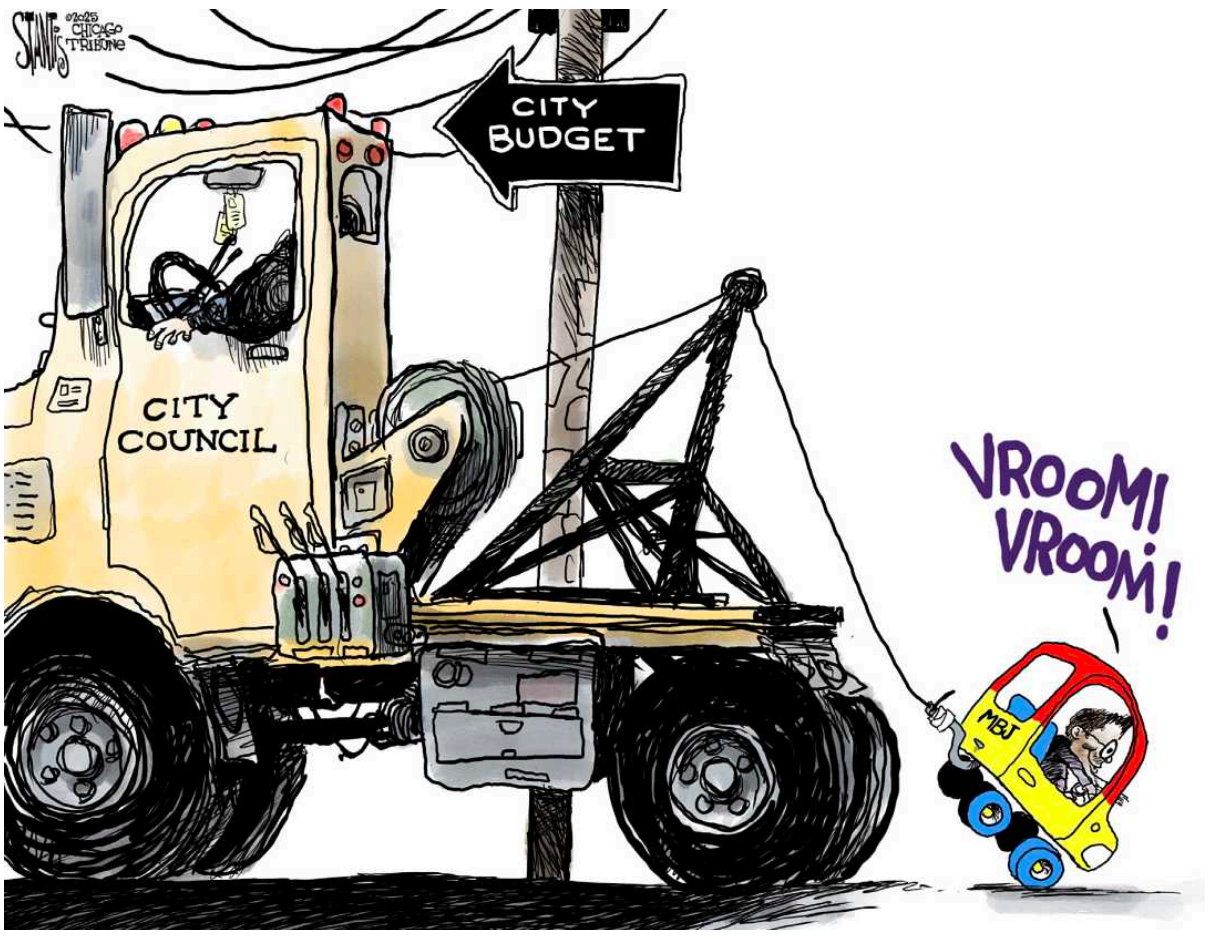
Ask President Donald Trump and members of Congress from either party how much they enjoyed the longest federal government shutdown ever. The federal government can issue debt and print money to paper over fiscal woes. But our city's functionality depends heavily on the confidence of bondholders, many of whom don't live here. Blowing the deadline would be disastrous.

It's not too late. The mayor should pivot and begin engaging in good faith with aldermen, including his own Finance Committee chair, Ald. Pat Dowell, 3rd, who was among the 26 to sign last week's letter outlining budget alternatives to the head tax.

Unions representing the city's workforce also should understand that even if they end up "winning" in this budget crisis by not agreeing to any money-saving concessions, they will risk losing far more in the future if the city's access to the debt markets is badly constrained or even shut off. If the mayor isn't going to provide appropriate leadership, those unions could help fill the breach — and it would be in their self-interest to do so. Now.

Unfortunately, an awful lot of short-term thinking seems still to be at work in the budget showdown.

Shared sacrifice is the only realistic — and fair — way out of this mess.



SCOTT STANTIS/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Somalis should be welcome in US. But not those who commit crimes en masse

Most Americans are sick and tired of the kind of reactionary politics that does nothing to stop people stealing taxpayers' hard-earned money. Take, for example, the circle-the-wagons responses to the scandal involving likely hundreds of Somali immigrants and descendants in Minnesota and the theft of more than a billion dollars from that state's famously generous social safety nets over about the last five years.

The crime ring here involved an outrageously widespread scheme to defraud Minnesota's Medicaid Housing Stabilization Services program through the creation of dubious nonprofit entities (such as one called Feeding Our Future) that could sign up individuals and then bill the state for social service work they never actually did for those folks, thereby allowing nefarious connected individuals to pocket the loot. Reportedly, more than 86 defendants, almost all of Somali origin and many with U.S. residency or citizenship, have been charged, with some 60 already given felony convictions. But this widely ignored story (nationally, at least) only gained national traction in the last couple of weeks once those with pre-existing narratives found the right fit.

The right realized several things. Here was an effective way to remind voters of the Democrats' poorly managed money-spill at the tail end of the COVID-19 crisis and to attach blame for this scandal to Tim Walz, the state's governor and recent vice presidential candidate, perhaps knocking him out of any future in national politics. The scandal also targeted one of the left's most absurd and easily correctable weaknesses: a reluctance to call out crime when doing so might cause the whistleblower to be called a racist. So what if real harm is being done?

Here there were clear echoes of a yet-worse scheme in the U.K. that involved the sexual abuse of hundreds of young, working-class British girls mostly by older Pakistani men, even as the authorities downplayed the scale of the abuse and soft-pedaled investigations for years, apparently due to a reluctance to sow "community" discord. Everyone in Britain now knows the country failed those girls.

On the naturally defensive left, the Minnesota story was seen as necessitating firing back. Not against the crimes, but against anti-immigrant jingoism, as writ large by Donald Trump's enraged and highly offensive statement that denigrated Somali immigrants as "garbage" and suggested they shouldn't be in the country, declaring, "we're going to go the wrong way if we keep taking in garbage into our country." That's why Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey was breaking bread for the cameras with Somali Americans this past week, even as Trump was fuming about kicking them all out of the country. For his part, Walz said he has put in new safeguards. But he seemed to rage not against the unfathomable duration of the billion-dollar crime spree, which he said "was stopping," but against Trump's reactive tirade, a justifiable target but also much easier than cleaning out his own house.

These are the words and actions of political leaders worried about the next election. We think most Americans understand what happened here and why, as well what is and is not appropriate to say and do.

They know Trump was wrong to denigrate an entire country as scofflaws and criminals, just as he was to imply that a majority of Somali Americans in Minnesota were part of this scheme. (There were hardly 80,000 people so accused.) On the other hand, the level of fraud here and the ease with which it was perpetrated is stunning ($1 billion is not small potatoes), not least because it stole money from those Minnesotans who most needed the help, which is something that Waltz might have noted with more outrage. And, if you examine the facts of the cases, it appears likely that much of the stolen Minnesota cash was sent back to Somalia, an impoverished nation where many people live on an income of little more than a $1 a day and whose GDP is almost wholly dependent on its diaspora sending money back home. One can hope it went to support families, but there are nefarious private and governmental groups in that nation such as the terror group al-Shabab and it's hardly a stretch to believe they wanted in on the money flying their way so freely from the Midwest.

It's also not racist to note that at least two generations of Somalis have had to withstand perpetually corrupt governments with leaders who were bilking their own populace. It thus is hardly surprising that some of them, demonstrably, didn't see much morally wrong with taking advantage of a government program with very weak guardrails.

Americans by now are familiar with the amount of money stolen from the government during that COVID-era largesse. And, of course, as the pendulum swung hard to the left during that era, pressure mounted to reduce application burdens for government aid in the years that followed, and get the money out faster to those in need. The real story here is about the widespread folly of believing that all people would act in good faith. In these cases, they clearly took advantage.

It's obvious that a federal inquiry is justified, however much Minnesota Democrats may want to avoid one. Any inquiry should focus on identifying what made it so easy to steal this money and why it was allowed to continue for so long, not on the entire Somali American community who have found a hospitable home in Minneapolis. One that most, but not all, of them deserve.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Anytime you get a chance to feed a city, you want to do it."

— Ben Johnson on his shirtless celebration of the Bears win

"This whole ideology with Chicago, I feel it. You love your city. I get it. You're passionate about that. I understand better now."

— Darren Bailey, remembering pushback he received from calling Chicago a "hellhole"

"We know this is not about peace. It's about business."

— Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk

"We need to have serious discussions here about what's going to come out of the budget, because right now he does not have a majority. We do."

— Ald. Scott Waguespack, 32nd on Chicago budget negotiations

"Our court is not merely a collection of buildings and procedures. It is the vital mechanism of which our community resolves its deepest conflicts and upholds its most cherished ideals."

— Charles Beach, new chief judge of Cook County

"We will restore tradition, and I'm eager to earn the trust of our players, alumni and fans while competing at the highest level."

— Pat Fitzgerald, Michigan State football coach

OPINION

It's time to rebuild the Republican Party, not rename it

By Bob Kustra

President Donald Trump attends a Cabinet meeting at the White House on Tuesday in Washington. Trump recently commented about renaming the Republican Party after himself. **JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/AP**

President Donald Trump's recent comments about renaming the Republican Party after him raises the question of whether this might be the spark that ignites a serious reconsideration of just what the Republican Party stands for and what the future holds for the party. Some will write off Trump's ruminations about changing the name to "Tpublican" or some other bastardized version as another of his egomaniacal rants to distract the media from learning about playboy Trump's earlier years with Jeffrey Epstein.

Yet, few believed Trump would tear down the entire East Wing of the White House to create a Mar-a-Lago North. This is the American president who has plastered the Oval Office with gold, now converted to the Trump family cash register with real estate deals and crypto scams ringing up sales for the billionaire family. Most Americans would not expect a sitting president to approve a new dollar coin with his portrait on it, but it is in the planning stages. There seems no end to Trump disgracing the office of the presidency with his monumental ego and tacky taste.

With the latest Gallup poll showing Trump and his party in trouble, with only 36% of Americans approving of his job performance, fair-weather Republicans and independents who voted for Trump in 2024 because he wasn't Kamala Harris may reconsider their vote for Republicans in the future. There are already signs of dissent at the polls with the recent elections of Democratic governors in New Jersey and Virginia.

The stakes are high for the Grand Old Party. Republicans are also in danger of losing control of Congress in the 2026 midterm elections with the economy worsening daily while Trump becomes the first president refusing to release basic economic data on job losses and inflation. There are already signs from the Senate Republican majority that Trump's behavior can no longer be ignored. In response to Trump's efforts to convince Senate Republicans to kill the filibuster, Republican Senate Majority Leader John Thune stiffed Trump and said there weren't enough Senate Republicans willing to make it happen.

In another message to Trump that times are changing, Republican Sen. Roger Wicker, chair of the Armed Services Committee, joined with his Democratic counterpart to investigate allegations that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered there to be no survivors in U.S. strikes on boats off South America. The House Committee followed suit assuring bipartisan oversight in both chambers.

Trump's feckless leadership of the Republican Party is reminiscent of Rip Van Winkle's experience. Rip woke up after a long 20-year sleep to find the world changed around him. Similarly, the Republican Party has awakened from the day Ronald Reagan admonished Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall to Trump's mismanaged and dangerous foreign policy. He is outfoxed by Chinese President Xi Jinping on tariffs at the expense of American farmers, and the war criminal Vladimir Putin plays Trump for a fool who yields in deference to the Russian president and his murderous assault on Ukraine.

Trump's feckless leadership of the Republican Party is reminiscent of Rip Van Winkle's experience. Rip woke up after a long 20-year sleep to find the world changed around him. Similarly, the Republican Party has awakened from the day Ronald Reagan admonished Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall to Trump's mismanaged and dangerous foreign policy.

Once the law-and-order party, Republicans are now led by a president who just pardoned a Honduran ex-president serving a 45-year term for receiving millions in bribes and partnering with narcotics traffickers. Trump also commuted the sentence of a private equity executive who just began a seven-year sentence for a $1.6 billion scheme that defrauded thousands of investors. But Trump had no problem calling for the execution of U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly, a war hero, who reminded our military forces they did not have to follow orders that broke the law.

Those who recently spoke at former Vice President Dick Cheney's funeral service offered a considerable contrast to Trump's brand of leadership. There is no doubt that Cheney leaves behind a career of disastrous foreign policy blunders, but he will also be remembered for endorsing Harris as the only alternative to Trump in 2024. His daughter, former U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney, read a letter Cheney wrote to his grandchildren, stating that "bonds of party must always yield to the single bond we share as Americans."

To justify what had to be his most difficult political decision, he said, "There has never been an individual who is a greater threat to our republic than Donald Trump." In the end, Cheney got it right, leaving his beloved Republican Party for his one vote against Trump in 2024.

Republicans in Congress may be waking up to the fact that the man Cheney called a threat to our republic will not be around forever. With an increasingly self-absorbed and unhinged president losing ground with some Republicans in Congress, it hardly seems the moment to attach any semblance of the Trump surname to their party. Now is the time to rebuild the Republican Party with Trump as a mere footnote of times gone bad.

Bob Kustra served two terms as Republican lieutenant governor of Illinois and 10 years as a state legislator. He is now host of "Readers Corner" on Boise State Public Radio and a regular columnist for the Idaho Statesman.

What Democrats can learn from the British left under Thatcher

By Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson

U.S. politics this coming year will be defined by the midterm elections, and if current trends continue, Democrats could take back Congress.

According to recent Marist polling, Democrats lead by 14 points on the national ballot question, while President Donald Trump's approval rating is at a new low of 36%.

The question is whether, and how, Democrats can keep the momentum going to turn out voters.

There are lessons to be learned from November's elections. That both progressives and moderates swept to victory might suggest that the way to go for Democrats in 2026 is to build a bigger tent to successfully navigate the choppy waters of a polarized electorate. But the real lesson of 2025 is that voters want a compelling alternative to the kind of politics that have made a safe, dignified and joyful life increasingly impossible for many people across the country.

Just think of New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's campaign, which was a master class in uncompromising and unapologetic concern for all people that emphasized people's real concerns about affordability. Or consider Virginia Gov.-elect Abigail Spanberger's emphasis on her competence and ability to address the high cost of living, rather than running on a platform of opposition to Trump.

This is not a new approach. In an influential 1979 article, the British cultural theorist Stuart Hall offered a diagnosis of the rise of the British new right and Labour's inability to mount a defense. His analysis holds important insights for the current political moment in the United States.

In the midst of economic crisis, Margaret Thatcher was able to generate popular support for economic policies that hurt most ordinary Brits. Hall examined why British social democrats failed to stop what he aptly called "the great moving right show."

According to Hall, Thatcher's genius was to amplify people's fears of economic loss and downward social mobility and recast them as a natural response to an assault on the British way of life. This way of life, ostensibly supported by the silent majority of ordinary British people, was built on individual responsibility, fairness and merit. It was threatened, or so Thatcher claimed, by irresponsible and unmeritorious immigrants, welfare scroungers and labor unionists who exploited the social safety net and dragged the country into economic crisis.

Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher holds up a one-pound note to the press to illustrate the devaluation and inflation of the note as she canvasses during the general election in London on April 2, 1979. **GEOFF BRUCE/CENTRAL PRESS/GETTY**

Sound familiar?

This narrative allowed Thatcher to build popular consent for economic austerity measures that purportedly punished welfare queens and lazy do-nothings but actually hurt the very Brits in whose interest Thatcher claimed to act.

Many on the British left took Thatcher's electoral success as a sign of people's confusion about which party really represented their interests. So social democrats saw it as their job to point out voters' mistake and make them understand that their interests aligned them with the Labour Party. Yet instead of building a platform around those interests to give voters a compelling alternative to Thatcherism, Labour offered more of the same: New Labour championed the very neoliberal reforms that were Thatcherism's signature project.

Voters' desire for a response to their fears combined with their resentment of the condescension of social democratic elites and a sense of being heard by Thatcher's appeal to the common sense of ordinary Brits. So, when Labour opted to respond to Thatcherism by meeting it on its own turf, voters asked to choose between two neoliberal reform projects preferred to talk to the organ grinder rather than the monkey.

Today's Democratic Party would be wise to learn from Labour's mistakes. If they hope to take back Congress in 2026, they should take seriously Americans' fears of economic loss and remind them who is responsible: Republicans shut down the government, Republicans refuse to fund health care and Republicans are denying Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits to hungry Americans. Democrats should also point out that groceries have become more expensive under Trump, inflation has risen on his watch, the labor market is at its weakest since the Great Recession in 2009 and Trump's tariffs are leading to higher prices for everything from coffee to furniture.

More importantly, Democrats have to engage voters in articulating a shared vision for the country's future. Not being Trump will not cut it.

Scholars in my field of political theory have long argued that what matters in politics is that people feel heard, are inspired to participate in collective decision-making about their lives and are provided with the infrastructure — from free buses to affordable housing and groceries and free child care — that allows them to do so. Even though Hall wrote in, and about, 1970s Britain, his analysis has not lost any of its perspicacity or relevance.

U.S. Democrats are caught in the same moving right show as British social democrats were in the 1970s. Over the last decade, the Democratic Party's response to Trumpism has been to declare itself the last hope against authoritarianism, while at the same time accepting Trumpism's central premises — on immigration, welfare, health care and education, to name just a few. But playing the political game on your opponent's terms is a surefire way to lose — especially if your opponent isn't playing in good faith.

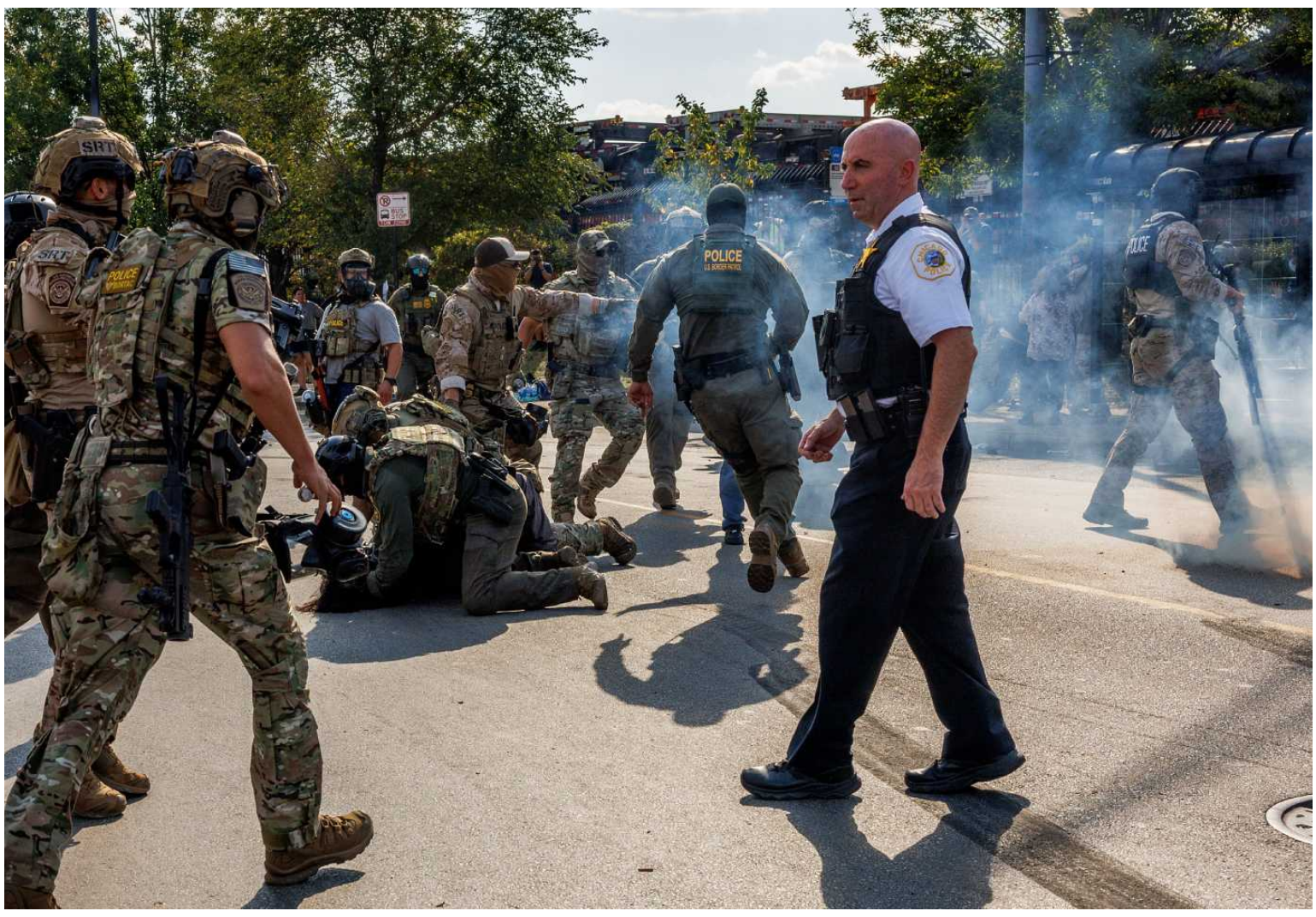
For Democrats clamoring to take back Congress in 2026, victory will neither be found in the center nor in a bigger tent, but in a way of doing politics that engages voters in a project of collective world-building.

Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson is an associate professor of philosophy and political science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a public voices fellow with The OpEd Project.

OPINION

When policing becomes political, public safety suffers

By Diane Goldstein



Chicago police watch as federal officers detain people while members of the community and activists protest near the 3900 block of South Kedzie Avenue on Oct. 4. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Over the past few months, a troubling pattern has emerged across America's major cities. As President Donald Trump's administration dispatches federal agents and National Guard troops to jurisdictions — often over the objections of local residents and leaders — police departments are being forced to navigate an increasingly precarious position. If they embrace federal intervention, they risk being seen as acting against the will of the communities they serve. If they fail to align with Washington's agenda, they invite political backlash for not showing unquestioning loyalty to the "thin blue line" that unites law enforcement.

This no-win situation is yet another symptom of the growing politicization of law enforcement and public safety. And as a retired police lieutenant who spent more than two decades on the force, I see this trend as an existential threat to the legitimacy our profession relies on to be effective.

Anyone who has worked in this field knows that policing can only function through community trust and cooperation. Our ability to uphold safety depends on the public's belief that police are there to protect them — not to serve as an occupying force or an arm of political power. Federal encroachment on local policing blurs that line, creating a tightrope act that's proving difficult for departments to balance.

In the Chicago area, federal law enforcement's heavy-handed tactics have put local police directly in the crossfire, both literally and figuratively. After federal agents repeatedly deployed tear gas in residential neighborhoods — exposing at least 40 Chicago police officers and countless bystanders — a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order blocking the use of certain types of force against protesters. In nearby Broadview, federal agents have also tear-gassed local police officers outside an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility that has drawn regular protests. The village's police chief has accused ICE agents of making false police reports, and his department has opened at least three criminal investigations into incidents involving ICE agents.

In Washington, D.C., local police are facing sharp criticism after failing to document a shooting by a federal agent during an October traffic stop. While the Metropolitan Police Department was not responsible for the shooting, its decision not to include the gunfire in a subsequent incident report has raised serious questions about transparency and accountability. One officer even testified that a superior instructed him not to document the incident in court records. Whether that decision stemmed from confusion, pressure or fear of political repercussions, the result is the same: a loss of public trust that hinders the department's ability to do the job effectively.

Similar problems have emerged in Portland, where police leaders have testified that federal intervention has made their jobs harder, not easier. During a recent federal trial over the legality of sending National Guard troops to the city, a local police commander told the court that protests swelled in size and intensity following Trump's deployment order. He also documented "startling" incidents of excessive force by federal officers, including the use of tear gas and pepper balls affecting both protesters and local police. His testimony reinforced concerns among local officials who have warned that federal involvement is creating unnecessary danger for officers and the public alike.

These episodes point to rising tensions between local and federal law enforcement, which are only complicating the broader public safety landscape. Each new confrontation creates additional risks for the community and forces local police to divert attention from their core work of preventing and solving crime. That strain appeared to surface again in Chicago in October, when Border Patrol agents clashed with protesters and local police were accused of not providing adequate backup to secure the scene — a claim the city's police superintendent has denied.

Some departments have also sought to carve out some much-needed middle ground in the face of this emerging conflict. After millions of Americans took to the streets for October's "No Kings" protests, several large agencies publicly thanked demonstrators for keeping the peace and reaffirmed their commitment to protecting First Amendment rights.

Rather than buy into an "us versus them" framing, police in cities such as Chicago, Seattle, San Diego and New York issued statements that remained community-focused and free of partisan posturing. These departments seemed to recognize that the protesters were people whose trust and support they need to be effective and whose freedoms they are sworn to uphold. At a time of rising polarization, this sort of engagement reminds the public that police ultimately serve the community, not any political entity. But the politicized nature of federal interference only makes that message harder to maintain.

At its core, policing depends on legitimacy — the belief that officers act fairly, lawfully and in service of the people. Once that belief falters, public trust falters with it. The more law enforcement is pulled into partisan battles, the harder it becomes for officers to foster cooperation. Instead of building partnerships, they're left trying to police through division.

If leaders truly want to act in the interest of public safety, they should start by ensuring that police remain insulated from politics. That means respecting the boundaries between federal and local authority, holding law enforcement to high standards of transparency and accountability, and trusting communities to shape their own safety priorities. At the end of the day, policing works best when departments can focus on their core mission — keeping communities safe — without the added distraction of politics.

Retired Lt. Diane Goldstein is a 21-year police veteran and executive director of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership, known as LEAP, a nonprofit group of police, judges and other law enforcement professionals who support policies that improve public safety and police-community relations.

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

What about CPD?

In the last mayoral election, Chicagoans were presented with two options: Vote for Brandon Johnson and allow the Chicago Teachers Union to run the city or for Paul Vallas and have the city run by the police union.

Well, Johnson is not working out very well, but Vallas' Dec. 4 op-ed "What can be done to restore faith in Chicago's justice system?" shows why his election would not necessarily have been a better choice.

Vallas describes what he calls a "revolving door of criminality" and says it is "a financial disaster." He correctly states that "Chicago has spent over a billion dollars on police-related settlements and judgments." He then decries the SAFE-T Act and the federal consent decree, writing that they create "more lucrative paths" for suing the police and the city. Nowhere does he mention that the vast amounts in police-related settlements and judgments are due to actual police criminal activity, such as what former Chicago police Cmdr. Jon Burge and former Sgt. Ronald Watts were involved in and the murder of Laquan McDonald, and police misconduct, such as the horrific arrest of Anjanette Young. And such felonious activities have been allowed to continue. The code of silence protects officers from discovery and prosecution.

Vallas lays the blame not on the Chicago Police Department but on those who would make it easier to sue the police and the city. Want to reduce the amount spent on settlements and judgments? How about subtracting that money from police salaries? Then officers might have an incentive not to violate laws or look the other way when criminal activity by their peers occurs.

Vallas notes that the clearance rate for nonfatal shootings was around 6% when last reported. He then cites the justice system's use of "electronic monitoring or nominal court supervision." It is unclear what this has to do with CPD"s clearance rate.

Studies have shown that CPD's clearance rates for such crimes as homicide and aggravated assault are among the lowest in the nation. Is it any wonder? Until the reputation of CPD improves, we cannot expect CPD's clearance rates to get much higher. The relationship between CPD and the citizens in the communities where most of these types of crimes occur is such that people are not willing to assist the CPD in its investigations. The problem is not with the people, but with the department.

One way to restore faith in Chicago's justice system is to insist on a better police department.

— David Grossman, former chief investigator, Chicago Police Department, Office of Professional Standards, Chicago

Impacts of data centers

Illinois policymakers have entered a pivotal window to determine how data centers will impact our electric grid. The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is weighing proposed changes to ComEd's rate structure, while lawmakers are crafting legislation to establish long-term rules. Together, these choices could shape Illinois' clean energy goals, grid reliability and our electricity costs for years to come.

When a data center comes to town, it brings three major energy challenges. The first is cost. ComEd's price per kilowatt-hour is up 47% since last October, and it has proposed $500 million-plus in transmission projects for individual data centers — costs it will eventually pass on to customers. This is categorically unfair and must be addressed by lawmakers.

Second is reliability. While Illinois hasn't faced this yet, data centers in other states are pushing their grids to the limit, raising concerns about reliability here at home. We have to keep the lights on.

Third is environmental impacts. A race to power data centers risks leaning on aging coal plants and building new natural gas plants, forcing Illinoisans to shoulder the costs of polluting, unhealthy and expensive generation by fossil fuels.

Fortunately, Illinois has two opportunities to set the state on the right course — ICC action in January and legislation in the spring. Two reforms stand out.

First, data centers should pay directly for the infrastructure they require. This is basic fairness — everyday households should not pay for the lines, poles and wires required to hook a data center up to the grid. Lawmakers must close this loophole that allows data centers to socialize their infrastructure costs.

Second, data centers must bring their own clean energy. If a developer wants to plug into our increasingly crowded grid, they should supply the clean power needed to meet their demand. Illinoisans shouldn't have to subsidize their electricity or breathe the pollution from the fossil fuel plants built to serve them.

Adopting these reforms would make Illinois an attractive place for responsible clean data centers. Currently, there's a long wait for data centers to connect to ComEd's grid. These changes could let projects that meet the state's standards connect more quickly — promoting both efficiency and fairness.

Illinois can support economic growth without sacrificing affordability, reliability or its clean energy leadership — but only if Illinois regulators and lawmakers act quickly.

— Brad Klein, managing attorney, Environmental Law and Policy Center, Chicago

How US moves freight

John Lippert's reporting brings forward voices I deeply respect — Anthony Hatch, Larry Gross and Bill Stephens — and his framing of the Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger is exactly right ("Rail merger could have lasting impact on city," Dec. 1). Yet the issue is far larger than any one article can capture.

What we need now is a national conversation about the entire U.S. freight network: its decades of deregulation, the unintended consequences and whether it is finally time to toll the Interstate Highway System. The UP-NS merger won't pull trucks off the highway, and still, I support it. Those two statements are not contradictory.

The UP-NS merger is neither a silver bullet nor a death blow. It is the next logical step in a freight ecosystem distorted by 40 years of policymaking that artificially cheapened over-the-road trucking through taxpayer-funded highways while rail was left to finance its entire fixed plant. Chicago — the most essential and most dysfunctional node in American logistics — embodies this imbalance. UP-NS is correct: A single-line transcontinental network will reduce touches, shorten dwell and cut crosstown drayage. But it will not materially shift freight from truck to rail without federal policy changes that force trucking to pay the true cost of the infrastructure it consumes.

As Gross notes, rail's long-haul share has been eroding for years while trucks, operating on subsidized pavement, have dominated freight even when they are the least efficient option. If the U.S. is serious about congestion relief, emissions reduction and supply-chain resiliency, then tolling the Interstate Highway System is inevitable. Rail cannot compete until trucking is priced honestly — every Class I CEO and state Department of Transportation engineer knows this.

Lippert's piece also highlights deeper structural questions: Will we continue with a balkanized rail network stitched together by temporary alliances or finally accept that a coast-to-coast architecture is the logical evolution of the system? And will we keep ignoring the competitive distortion created by BNSF Railway-J.B. Hunt Quantum — a vertically integrated intermodal juggernaut built on guaranteed NS access?

Former Surface Transportation Board Chair Marty Oberman is right: The STB will review this merger rigorously and independently. That integrity is essential because this merger forces the country to examine competition, gateways, labor, service, environmental impacts and the geometry of the national network itself.

I support UP-NS because it forces questions about how America moves freight. This debate is long overdue — and far bigger than Chicago or any two railroads.

— Brian Watt, managing partner, 1634 Company, Winter Haven, Florida

We need peace here

"Pope brings Lebanese vital message" was a headline in Monday's Nation & World section of the Tribune. I would love to read: "Pope brings America a vital message of peace."

— Barbara E. Silvestri, Lombard

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VINTAGE CHICAGO TRIBUNE
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‘Twins, Dolls, or Hoax?’

‘Sawdust Babies’ murder trial of 1922 spread confusion in Hammond

By Paul Dailing

Hazel McNally laughed as a prosecutor described how she brutally murdered her infant twins.

She “laughed uproariously” as witnesses and lawyers sniped, she “snickered” at grieving family and had a “twinkle of merriment return to her eyes” as her husband described how she would pelt him with plates and shoes, according to a Chicago Tribune report.

“While Frank McNally, her 55 year old husband accuser, sat with glum face, alternately glaring at a witness and glancing away towards a nearby window, Mrs. McNally, just 26 and jauntily dressed, snickered behind her gloved hand as his son, Lloyd, told how tenderly the ‘father’ had carried one of the ‘dummy twins,’ ” the Oct. 19, 1922, Tribune said.

For three days in 1922, Hammond hosted a murder trial that captivated and confused the nation. Autoworker Frank McNally had accused his wife of killing their children — Laurene Hazel McNally and her twin brother, Lauren Frank McNally — and disposing of their bodies.

The mother’s defense? The babies she nursed, walked around Hammond in a stroller, took to Chicago on shopping trips and kept under a veil in a darkened room for ill-defined health reasons were actually two doll heads she attached to baby clothes and stuffed with straw.

“‘Doll Murder’ Dazes Court” a Tribune headline blared. Los Angeles Times’ front page begged “Twins, Dolls, or Hoax?” as the New York Times tucked its coverage inside under “Amusements.” Locally, papers dubbed it the “Twin-Doll Mystery,” the “Phantom Twins” or, in alliteration from the South Bend Tribune, “The Sensational ‘Sawdust Babies’ Affair.”

Monday would have been Lauren and Laurene McNally’s 104rd birthday, if they existed.

Tribune reports and records from the Indiana State Library and South Bend Historical Society showed how the case played out.

Hazel McNally claimed the babies had always been dolls, sometimes saying it was a test to see if Frank would be a good father, sometimes saying it was a scheme concocted with her husband to make his ex-wife jealous, and sometimes saying a “mother mania” made her claim dolls, random babies and, in one case, a dog as her own children.

Frank McNally said the dolls appeared a few months after the babies’ birth. He said Hazel McNally told him passing off dolls as their children would keep up appearances during the twins’ long hospital stays, but over the months he slowly, horrifyingly realized his babies were never coming home.

As police tore up the McNallys’ former backyard for bodies, the courts called friends, neighbors and family to testify whether Lauren and Laurene were babies or dolls.

“Here’s where it gets weird,” Kristie Erickson, the South Bend Historical Society’s deputy executive director, told the Tribune in a recent interview: No one could agree.

Hazel McNally smiles while on trial in October 1922, accused of murdering her twin babies, according to her husband, Frank McNally. Hazel McNally insisted there were no real children, only dolls she pretended were her newborns. **CHICAGO TRIBUNE HISTORICAL PHOTO**

Frank McNally sits during his wife’s trial in October 1922, where he accused Hazel McNally of murdering their twin babies and replacing them with dolls. **CHICAGO TRIBUNE HISTORICAL PHOTO**

The Hammond home and yard of Frank McNally, who claimed that his wife, Hazel McNally, killed their twin babies. A search was made on the property for the bodies of the missing twins in 1922. Editors note: This historic print shows handpainting and crop marks. **UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD**

Hazel McNally, 26, is seen while on trial in October 1922 for the murder of her twin babies, who she said were just dolls. Her husband, Frank McNally, disagreed. **CHICAGO TRIBUNE HISTORICAL PHOTO**

From housekeeper to wife

Hazel Hills met Frank McNally in November 1920, answering a Tribune ad for a housekeeper. She was 24 with a 7-year-old from a previous marriage. He was a divorced grandfather in his 50s. They married on April 23, 1921.

Hazel seemed to blend well with Frank’s family, becoming particularly close to her similar-aged daughter-in-law Cleora McNally. During one of their swimming trips to Lake Michigan that summer, Hazel had a confession. “At that time she told me she was to become a mother and that it was distasteful to her,” Cleora testified.

Any pregnancy would presumably have been over by September, when Hazel McNally put an ad in the Lake County Times looking to “adopt an infant at once.”

It’s possible Hazel McNally had a miscarriage or that she had an abortion, which was illegal in Indiana before 1973 and since 2023. But her lawyer objected to Hazel McNally’s doctor testifying about whether she had been pregnant, instead presenting a statement from a doctor in Wisconsin saying Hazel McNally had been unable to have children since an operation in 1919.

Amid this mystery, the twins were or weren’t born on Dec. 8, 1921. They were too sickly for visitors, Hazel said. She kept them in a darkened room under a veil, saying the midwife had used too much boric acid on their eyes. Applying some boric acid was a common practice after birth at the time. Mary Griffiths, a nurse Frank McNally had hired, said she later discovered no midwife had been called.

The diapers were never soiled, Griffiths said. Hazel McNally explained the children had such tender skin that she lined their diapers with cotton. “She would wrap the cotton in newspaper and hand it to me to burn,” the Lake County Times quoted Griffiths. “I never had any reason to doubt her so I never examined any of the cotton.”

But Griffiths also testified she helped Hazel McNally pump full bottles, lactation that was more likely if Hazel McNally had been pregnant and was still producing prolactin. Griffiths also testified she saw Hazel McNally wipe blood from the boy’s nose.

“Dolls don’t bleed,” Griffiths snapped at Hazel McNally’s lawyer.

In late January 1922, Frank McNally said, his wife took Lauren to a hospital in Chicago for a “leaking valve of the heart” and took his sister, Laurene, four weeks later. “She said it had some trouble I didn’t know anything about,” Frank McNally testified. “When she came back she had the two dummies.”

Hazel, Frank said, cajoled, browbeat and at points physically abused him into pretending the dolls were their children, parading the phantoms in a baby buggy.

That spring, suspicious neighbor Agnes Schermer snuck into the darkened, closed-off nursery and lifted the veil over the crib. Glassy, lifeless eyes met her gaze.

“I didn’t know whether the baby was sick or dead, and I put the cover back quick,” Schermer testified. “Later I told Mrs. McNally they were saying in the neighborhood she was carrying dummies around. I had to laugh when I saw her pushing them in the carriage after that.”

The couple retired the buggy and changed the story to say the twins were with Hazel McNally’s parents. Hazel McNally said she smashed the dolls. She and her husband separated that September. In early October, Hazel McNally said her husband begged her to take him back. Frank McNally said his wife hit him with a mop.

While she was in jail awaiting trial for assault, Frank McNally swore out the murder charges.

Reasonable doubt

After three days of swirling, contradictory stories, Judge Henry Cleveland dismissed the case.

He found prosecutors had raised reasonable doubt as to whether the twins had lived, but hadn’t proved they died. No corpus, no delicti. The courtroom crowd of mostly women cheered. Hazel McNally fainted. Frank McNally quietly snuck out the back.

Frank McNally died of pneumonia in February 1923, swearing to the end that his wife got away with murder by concocting a story too ridiculous to doubt. They never divorced; his death certificate lists Hazel McNally as his widow. Today, he rests in an unmarked grave in South Bend’s Highland Cemetery.

No record of Hazel McNally’s final days could be located. “Did she change her name back to her maiden name, or take another name entirely, or move away? I don’t know,” Erickson said. “She vanishes into the wind.”

The last known photograph of “Doll Mother” Hazel McNally appeared in the November 1922 issue of the trade journal Toys & Novelties. She sits smiling with two dolls she bought at a Hammond department store after the trial. They were perfect matches, she claimed, for her dear departed twins and perfect product placement, the dollmakers hoped, for New York-based Fleischaker & Baum’s Effanbee line.

“We’ll say it’s a triumph for American made dolls, for when they are produced so close to life that they fool the father and the neighbors, it’s going some,” the toy journal said.

Paul Dailing is a freelancer writer and creator of the Chicago Corruption Walking Tour. You can find more at www.pauldailing.com.

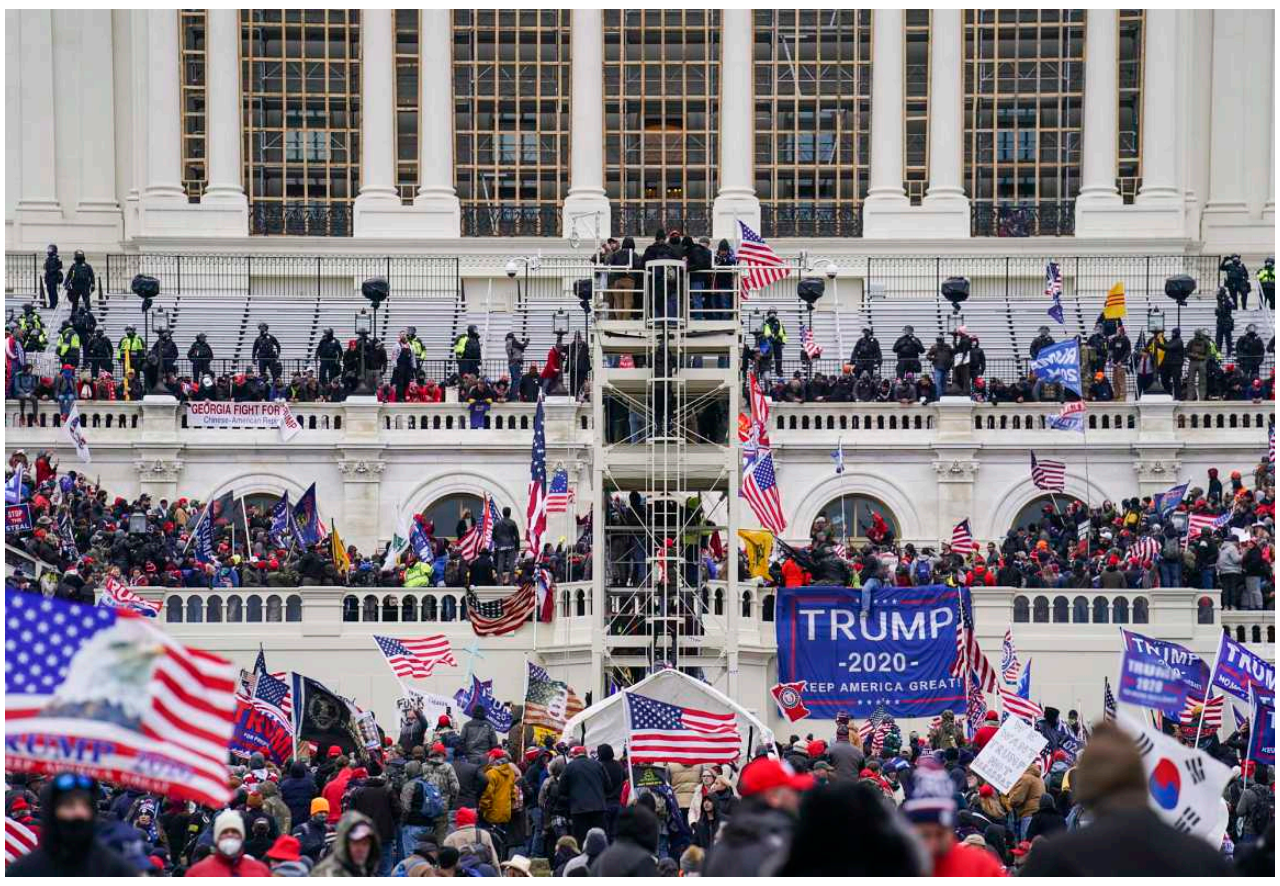
Have an idea for Vintage Chicago Tribune? Share it with Marianne Mather at mmather@chicagotribune.com and Kori Rumore at krumore@chicagotribune.com.

NATION & WORLD

DOJ plays up arrest in DC bomb case

But Jan. 6 violence at US Capitol often goes unmentioned

By Alanna Durkin Richer and Eric Tucker
Associated Press



Insurrectionists loyal to President Donald Trump breach the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. **JOHN MINCHILLO/AP**

WASHINGTON — After the arrest of a man charged with placing two pipe bombs outside the headquarters of the Republican and Democratic national parties on Jan. 5, 2021, the warning from the Trump administration was clear: If you come to the nation's capital to attack citizens and institutions of democracy, you will be held accountable.

Yet Justice Department leaders who announced the arrest were silent about the violence that had taken place when supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol and clashed with police one day after those bombs were discovered.

It was the latest example of the Trump's administration's effort to rewrite the history of the riot, through pardons and the firings of lawyers who prosecuted the participants of the siege, and of the disconnect for a government that prides itself for cracking down on violent crime and supporting law enforcement but has papered over the brutality of the Jan. 6 attacks on police officers.

"The administration has ignored and attempted to whitewash the violence committed by rioters on Jan. 6 because they were the president's supporters. They were trying to install him a second time against the will of the voters in 2020," said Michael Romano, who prosecuted the rioters before leaving the Justice Department this year. "And it feels like the effort to ignore that is purely transactional."

The White House referred comment to the Justice Department, which referred comment to the FBI.

FBI Director Kash Patel, as a conservative podcast host during the Biden administration, had called the Jan. 6 rioters "political prisoners" and offered to represent them for free. But on Thursday, he said the arrest of the pipe bomb suspect, Brian Cole Jr., 30, was in keeping with Trump's commitment to "secure our nation's capital."

"When you attack American citizens, when you attack our institutions of legislation, when you attack the nation's capital, you attack the very being of our way of life," Patel said. "And this FBI and this Department of Justice stand here to tell you that we will always combat it."

Patel's deputy, Dan Bongino, had suggested before joining the FBI that federal law enforcement had wasted time investigating Jan. 6 rioters and anti-abortion activists.

"These are threats to the United States?" he said on a podcast last year. "Grandma is in the gulag for a trespassing charge on January 6th."

Bongino indicated last year he believed the pipe bomb incident was an "inside job" that involved a "massive cover-up."

No public link has emerged between the pipe bombs and the riot, and Cole's arrest was a significant development in a long-running investigation that had confounded authorities, who are now are assembling a portrait of Cole.

People familiar with the matter told The Associated Press that among the statements Cole made to investigators is that he believed conspiracy theories about the 2020 election, which Trump has insisted was stolen from him in favor of Democrat Joe Biden. The people were not authorized to discuss ongoing investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity.

There was no widespread fraud in that election, which a range of election officials across the country, including Trump's former attorney general, William Barr, have confirmed. Republican governors in key states crucial to Biden's victory have also vouched for the integrity of the elections in their states. Nearly all the legal challenges from Trump and his allies were dismissed by the courts.

The tough-on-crime words heard during Thursday's announcement about Cole's arrest were at odds with the Republican administration's repeated efforts to play down the violence of Jan. 6.

Trump's clemency action on his first day back in the White House in January applied to all 1,500-plus people charged with participating in the attack on the foundations of American democracy. That included defendants seen on camera attacking police with makeshift weapons such as flagpoles, a crutch and a hockey stick. More than 100 police officers were injured.

Earlier this year, the DOJ asked the FBI for the names of agents who participated in Jan. 6 investigations, a demand feared within the bureau for as a possible precursor to mass firings.

In August, Patel fired Brian Driscoll, who as the FBI's acting director in the early days of the Trump administration resisted handing over those names.

Trump's administration, meanwhile, has fired or demoted numerous prosecutors who worked on Jan. 6 cases, including more than two dozen lawyers who had been hired for temporary assignments to support the investigation but were moved into permanent roles after Trump won the 2024 election.

In October, two federal prosecutors were locked out of their government devices and told they were being put on leave after filing court papers that described those who attacked the Capitol as a "mob of rioters."

The Justice Department later submitted a new court filing that stripped mentions of the Jan. 6 riot.

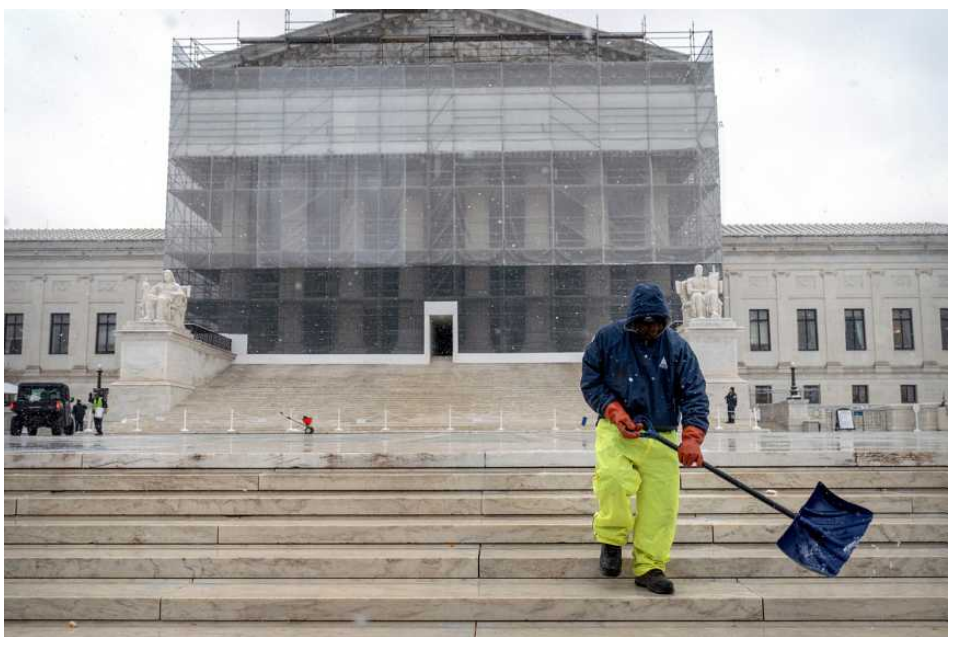
One man whose case was dismissed because of Trump's pardons was accused of hurling an explosive device and a large piece of wood at a group of officers who trying to defend an entrance to the Capitol.

Some officers later said they had "believed they were going to die," prosecutors wrote in court papers, and several reported suffering temporary hearing loss.

Justices weigh increasing power of the presidency

High court to review ruling that conflicts with Trump's firings

By Mark Sherman
Associated Press


A worker shovels snow and ice Friday in front of the Supreme Court building in Washington. The justices are scheduled to hear a landmark case Monday. **MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP**

WASHINGTON — Chief Justice John Roberts has led the Supreme Court's conservative majority on a steady march of increasing the power of the presidency, starting well before Donald Trump's time in the White House.

The justices could take the next step in a case being argued Monday that calls for a unanimous 90-year-old decision limiting executive authority to be overturned.

The court's conservatives, liberal Justice Elena Kagan noted in September, seem to be "raring to take that action."

They already have allowed Trump, in the opening months of the Republican's second term, to fire almost everyone he has wanted, despite the court's 1935 decision in Humphrey's Executor that prohibits the president from removing the heads of independent agencies without cause.

The officials include Rebecca Slaughter, whose firing from the Federal Trade Commission is at issue in the current case, as well as officials from the National Labor Relations Board, the Merit Systems Protection Board and the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The only officials who have survived efforts to remove them are Lisa Cook, a Federal Reserve governor, and Shira Perlmutter, a copyright official with the Library of Congress. The court already has suggested that it will view the Fed differently from other independent agencies, and Trump has said he wants Cook out because of allegations of mortgage fraud. She says she did nothing wrong.

Humphrey's Executor has long been a target of the conservative legal movement that has embraced an expansive view of presidential power known as the unitary executive.

The case before the high court involves the same agency, the FTC, that was at issue in 1935. The justices established that presidents — Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt at the time — could not fire the appointed leaders of the alphabet soup of federal agencies without cause.

The decision ushered in an era of powerful independent federal agencies charged with regulating labor relations, employment discrimination, the air waves and much else.

Proponents of the unitary executive theory have said the modern administrative state gets the Constitution all wrong: Federal agencies that are part of the executive branch answer to the president, and that includes the ability to fire their leaders at will.

As Justice Antonin Scalia wrote in a 1988 dissent that has taken on mythical status among conservatives, "this does not mean some of the executive power, but all of the executive power."

Since 2010 and under Roberts' leadership, the Supreme Court has steadily whittled away at laws restricting the president's ability to fire people.

In 2020, Roberts wrote for the court that "the President's removal power is the rule, not the exception" in a decision upholding Trump's firing of the head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau despite job protections similar to those upheld in Humphrey's case.

In the 2024 immunity decision that spared Trump from being prosecuted for his efforts to overturn the 2020 election results, Roberts included the power to fire among the president's "conclusive and preclusive" powers that Congress lacks the authority to restrict.

But according to legal historians and even a prominent proponent of the originalism approach to interpreting the Constitution that is favored by conservatives, Roberts may be wrong about the history underpinning the unitary executive.

"Both the text and the history of Article II are far more equivocal than the current Court has been suggesting," wrote Caleb Nelson, a University of Virginia law professor who once served as a law clerk to Justice Clarence Thomas.

Jane Manners, a Fordham University law professor, said she and other historians filed briefs with the court to provide history and context about the removal power in the country's early years that also could lead the court to revise its views.

"I'm not holding my breath," she said.

Slaughter's lawyers embrace the historians' arguments, telling the court that limits on Trump's power are consistent with the Constitution and U.S. history.

The Justice Department argues Trump can fire board members for any reason as he works to carry out his agenda and that the precedent should be tossed aside.

"Humphrey's Executor was always egregiously wrong," Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote.

A second question in the case could affect Cook, the Fed governor. Even if a firing turns out to be illegal, the court wants to decide whether judges have the power to reinstate someone.

Death cap mushrooms are often mistaken for edible ones. **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

Calif. issues wild mushroom warning after deadly outbreak

Associated Press

California officials are warning foragers after an outbreak of poisoning linked to wild mushrooms that has killed one adult and caused severe liver damage in several patients, including children.

The state poison control system has identified 21 cases of amatoxin poisoning, likely caused by death cap mushrooms, the health department said Friday. The toxic wild mushrooms are often mistaken for edible ones because of their appearance and taste.

"Death cap mushrooms contain potentially deadly toxins that can lead to liver failure," Erica Pan, director of the California Department of Public Health, said in a statement. "Because the death cap can easily be mistaken for edible safe mushrooms, we advise the public not to forage for wild mushrooms at all during this high-risk season."

One adult has died and several patients have required intensive care, including at least one who might need a liver transplant.

Wet weather fuels the growth of death cap mushrooms, and officials warn against any wild mushroom foraging to avoid confusion. Residents in central California's Monterey County became ill after eating mushrooms found in a local park, according to county health officials. Another cluster of cases were in the San Francisco Bay Area, but state health officials warned that the risk is everywhere.

There were more than 4,500 cases of exposure to unidentified mushrooms logged at America's Poison Centers in 2023, according to the National Poison Data System annual report. Roughly half were in children, who experts warn may pick and eat a mushroom while playing outside.

The death cap mushroom and the "destroying angel" mushroom look and taste similar to edible mushrooms, so experts warn that a mushroom's color is not a reliable way of detecting its toxicity. And whether it is eaten raw or cooked does not matter.

People can have stomach cramping, nausea, diarrhea or vomiting within 24 hours after ingesting a toxic mushroom. Though symptoms may improve, officials warn that patients can still develop serious complications, including liver damage, that surface later.

Threats pile up against Indiana GOP

Trump, allies press senators to redraw congressional map

By Thomas Beaumont and Isabella Volmert
Associated Press

Annette Groos rallies against a GOP redistricting push Sept. 18 at the Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis. **MICHAEL CONROY/AP**

Spencer Deery's son was getting ready for school when someone tried to provoke police into swarming his home by reporting a fake emergency.

Linda Rogers said there were threats at her home and the golf course that her family has run for generations.

Jean Leising faced a pipe bomb scare that was emailed to local law enforcement.

The three are among roughly a dozen Republicans in the Indiana Senate who have seen their lives turned upside down while President Donald Trump pushes to redraw the state's congressional map to expand the party's power in the 2026 midterm elections.

It's a bewildering and frightening experience for lawmakers who consider themselves loyal party members and never imagined they would be doing their jobs under the same shadow of violence that has darkened American political life in recent years.

Redistricting is normally done once a decade after a new national census. Trump wants to accelerate the process in hopes of protecting the Republicans' thin majority in the U.S. House next year. His allies in Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio and Texas have already gone along with his plans for new political lines.

Now Trump's campaign faces its greatest test yet in a stubborn pocket of Midwestern conservatism. Although Indiana Gov. Mike Braun and the House of Representatives are on board, the proposal may fall short with senators who value their civic traditions and independence over what they fear would be short-term partisan gain.

"When you have the president of the United States and your governor sending signals, you want to listen to them," said Rogers, who has not declared her position on the redistricting push. "But it doesn't mean you'll compromise your values."

On Friday, Trump posted a list of senators who "need encouragement to make the right decision," and he took to social media Saturday to say that if legislators "stupidly say no, vote them out of Office - They are not worthy - And I will be there to help!"

Meanwhile, the conservative campaign organization Turning Point Action said it would spend heavily to unseat anyone who voted "no."

Senators are scheduled to convene Monday to consider the proposal after months of turmoil. Resistance could signal the limits of Trump's otherwise undisputed dominance of the Republican Party.

Republican leaders in the Indiana Senate said in mid-November that they would not hold a vote on the matter because there was not enough support for it.

The threats against senators began shortly after that.

Sen. Sue Glick, a Republican who was first elected in 2010 and previously served as a local prosecutor, said she has never seen "this kind of rancor" in politics in her lifetime. She opposes redistricting, saying "it has the taint of cheating."

Not even the plan's supporters are immune to threats.

Republican Sen. Andy Zay said his vehicle-leasing business was targeted with a pipe bomb scare on the same day he learned that he would face a primary challenger who accuses Zay of being insufficiently conservative.

Zay, who has spent a decade in the Senate, believes the threat was related to his criticism of Trump's effort to pressure lawmakers. But the White House has not heeded his suggestions to build public support for redistricting through a media campaign.

"When you push us around and into a corner, we're not going to change because you hound us and threaten us," Zay said.

The White House did not respond to messages seeking a reaction to Zay's comments.

Trump easily won Indiana in all his presidential campaigns. But Indiana's political culture never became saturated with the sensibilities of Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement. Some 21% of GOP voters backed Nikki Haley over Trump in last year's presidential primary, even though the former South Carolina governor had already suspended her campaign two months earlier.

Trump also holds a grudge against Mike Pence, who served the state as a congressman and governor before becoming Trump's first vice president. A devout evangelical, Pence loyally accommodated Trump's indiscretions and scandals but refused to go along with Trump's attempt on Jan. 6, 2021, to overturn Democrat Joe Biden's victory.

"Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what was necessary," Trump posted online after an angry crowd of his supporters breached the U.S. Capitol.

Pence has not taken a public stance on his home state's redistricting effort. But the governor before him, Republican Mitch Daniels, recently said it was "clearly wrong."

The proposed map, which was approved by the state House on Friday, attempts to dilute the influence of Democratic voters in Indianapolis by splitting up the city. Parts of the capital would be grafted onto four different GOP-leaning districts, one of which would stretch all the way south to the border with Kentucky.

Rogers declined to discuss her feelings about the redistricting. A business leader from the suburbs of South Bend, she said she was "very disappointed" about the threats.

On Monday, Rogers will be front and center as a member of the Senate Elections Committee, the first one in that chamber to consider the redistricting bill.

"We need to do things in a civil manner and have polite discourse," she said.

A Palestinian girl carries a bag of bread Saturday under the first phase of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. **BASHAR TALEB/GETTY-AFP**

Gaza truce reaches 'critical moment,' Qatari leader says

By Samy Magdy and Josef Federman
Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Qatar's prime minister on Saturday said the Gaza ceasefire has reached a "critical moment" as its first phase winds down, with the remains of one Israeli hostage still to be handed over by militants.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told a conference in the Qatari capital that international mediators, led by the U.S., are working "to force the way forward" to the second phase to cement the deal.

"What we have just done is a pause," he told the Doha Forum. "We cannot consider it yet a ceasefire."

He added: "A ceasefire cannot be completed unless there is a full withdrawal of Israeli forces, there is stability back in Gaza, people can go in and out, which is not the case today."

While the ceasefire halted the heavy fighting of the two-year war, Gaza health officials say that more than 360 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the truce took effect Oct. 10.

In new violence, two Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike northwest of Gaza City, Shifa Hospital said.

Israel's army said it wasn't aware of an airstrike in that location. However, it said that Israeli soldiers Saturday killed three militants who crossed the "yellow line" into Israeli-controlled northern part of Gaza and "posed an immediate threat."

The Israeli army has said it has carried out a number of attacks on Palestinians crossing the ceasefire line.

Under the first phase of President Donald Trump's 20-point peace plan, the fighting stopped and dozens of hostages held in Gaza were exchanged for hundreds of Palestinians held in Israeli prison. Israel sent a delegation last week to Egypt for talks on returning the remains of the last hostage.

The next phase has not begun. It includes the deployment of an international security force in Gaza, formation of a new technocratic government for the territory, disarmament of Hamas and an eventual withdrawal of Israeli forces.

Arab and Western officials said Friday that an international body overseeing the ceasefire, to be led by Trump, is expected to be appointed by the end of the year. In the long term, the plan also calls for a possible "pathway" to Palestinian independence.

Qatar's prime minister said that even the upcoming phase should be "temporary" and that peace in the region could only take place with the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state — something that is opposed by Israel's hard-line government.

"If we are just resolving what happened in Gaza, the catastrophe that happened in the last two years, it's not enough," he said. "There is a root for this conflict. And this conflict is not only about Gaza."

The war erupted Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants entered Israel, killing some 1,200 people and taking over 250 people hostage. Israel responded with an offensive that has killed over 70,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and combatants, but says that nearly half the dead have been women and children.

Russia strikes Ukraine with air attack amid Florida talks

By Susie Blann
Associated Press

A sea drone that Ukrainian forces use against Russian targets takes off Saturday in Ukraine. **EFREM LUKATSKY/AP**

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia unleashed a major missile and drone barrage on Ukraine overnight into Saturday, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he had a "substantive phone call" with American officials engaged in talks with a Ukrainian delegation in Florida, aimed at ending the nearly 4-year war.

Russia used 653 drones and 51 missiles in the wide-reaching overnight attack on Ukraine, which triggered air raid alerts across the country and came as Ukraine marked Armed Forces Day, the country's air force said Saturday.

Ukrainian forces shot down and neutralized 585 drones and 30 missiles, the air force said, adding that 29 locations were struck.

At least eight people were wounded in the attacks, Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs Ihor Klymenko said. Among these, at least three people were wounded in the Kyiv region, according to local officials. Drone sightings were reported as far west as Ukraine's Lviv region.

Russia carried out a "massive missile-drone attack" on power stations and other energy infrastructure in several Ukrainian regions, Ukraine's national energy operator, Ukrenergo, wrote on Telegram.

Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant temporarily lost all off-site power overnight, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Saturday, citing its Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi. The plant is in an area that has been under Russian control since early in Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and is not in service, but it needs reliable power to cool its six shutdown reactors and spent fuel, to avoid any catastrophic nuclear incidents.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that energy facilities were the main targets of the attacks, also noting that a drone strike had "burned down" the train station in the city of Fastiv, located in the Kyiv region.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said its air defenses had shot down 116 Ukrainian drones over Russian territory overnight into Saturday.

Russian Telegram news channel Astra said Ukraine struck Russia's Ryazan Oil Refinery, sharing footage appearing to show a fire breaking out and plumes of smoke rising above the refinery. The Associated Press could not independently verify the video.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces later said Ukrainian forces had struck the refinery. Ryazan regional Gov. Pavel Malkov said a residential building had been damaged in a drone attack and that drone debris had fallen on the grounds of an "industrial facility," but did not mention the refinery.

Months of Ukrainian long-range drone strikes on Russian refineries have aimed to deprive Moscow of the oil export revenue it needs to pursue the war. Meanwhile, Kyiv and its Western allies say Russia is trying to cripple the Ukrainian power grid and deny civilians access to heat, light and running water for a fourth consecutive winter, in what Ukrainian officials call "weaponizing" the cold.

The latest round of attacks came as President Donald Trump's advisers and Ukrainian officials said they'll meet for a third day of talks Saturday in Florida, after making progress on finding agreement on a security framework for postwar Ukraine.

Zelenskyy said Saturday that he had been given an update over the phone by U.S. and Ukrainian officials at the talks.

"Ukraine is determined to keep working in good faith with the American side to genuinely achieve peace," Zelenskyy wrote on social media.

Following Friday's talks, the two sides had also offered the sober assessment that any "real progress toward any agreement" ultimately will depend "on Russia's readiness to show serious commitment to long-term peace."

The statement from U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner as well as Ukrainian negotiators Rustem Umerov and Andriy Hnatov came after they met for a second day Friday.

Separately, officials said the leaders of the United Kingdom, France and Germany would participate in a meeting with Zelenskyy on Monday in London.

Shark nets stir waters down under

Some experts warn devices not best way to keep people safe

By Yan Zhuang
The New York Times

Surfers ride on a big wave Sept. 19 as the sun rises over Bondi Beach in Sydney. Australia is a hot spot for shark attacks. **SAEED KHAN/GETTY-AFP**

Hauling his surfboard up a walkway at Sydney's Bondi Beach, Mat Chin said he did not think nets strung beneath the waves were doing anything to keep surfers like him safe from sharks.

At the same time, he said, "it just feels more comforting to know they're there."

Australia is one of only a few countries to use shark nets, a contentious form of beach protection. Some experts say the nets aren't the best way to keep people safe — and that they trap and kill an unnecessary number of other marine creatures.

Officials in New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, had planned to begin removing nets at three beaches as part of a pilot program. But when a surfer was killed by a shark at a Sydney beach in September, that plan was put on hold. Then, last month, a swimmer was killed by a shark at a remote beach a few hours north.

All of that has reignited a long-running debate over how best to keep surfers and swimmers safe.

Some beachgoers want the nets gone. That includes Ernie Garland, 52, a veteran surfer and swimmer.

"Shark nets are a very antiquated form of protection," he said at Bondi Beach hours after the most recent shark attack, sitting on a shoreline crowded with swimmers, surfers and sunbathers.

But for Chin, 18, and some other beachgoers, skepticism about the nets' effectiveness runs up against an instinctive discomfort about removing them.

"We already have cases of shark attacks with the nets," Barbara Satie, 25, said during an interview at Bondi. "If we take the nets out, maybe we'd have more."

Australia is a hot spot for shark attacks, along with the United States.

Fatal attacks are extremely rare, but Australia has done more than perhaps any other country to try to mitigate them.

That may be because its national identity is so closely tied to beach-going, said Christopher Pepin-Neff, a professor at the University of Sydney who studies shark attack prevention.

Shark nets were first introduced in New South Wales in 1937 after a spate of attacks. Today they are used at 51 beaches across the state, including Bondi, an emblem of Australian surfing culture.

Sharks can and often do swim around the nets, experts say. Most shark nets are about 500 feet by 20 feet. At a beach like Bondi, which is more than 3,000 feet long and has one net, most of the swimmable area is unnetted.

Many Australians mistakenly assume that shark nets prevent sharks from entering a beach, said Culum Brown, a professor of marine biology at Macquarie University in Sydney. "They think that the nets are a barrier — and they're not."

They are designed to reduce the likelihood of attacks by trapping and killing sharks, said Robert Harcourt, an emeritus professor of marine ecology at Macquarie.

"It's just a fishing technique, the same as we use to catch fish to eat," he said.

That's where conservationists see a problem. Although beach staff regularly check and release animals caught in the nets, many die in the meantime. Official figures from New South Wales show that beach netting caught 24 sharks and 199 other marine creatures last summer.

Only about a third of all those captured were released alive.

Whether shark nets keep people safe is a complex question.

Harcourt said the number of shark attacks at beaches with nets fell significantly in the years after their introduction in New South Wales, largely because they reduced the nearby shark population.

Over the decades, other factors added to the decline. For example, Sydney moved away from ocean dumping of sewage and offal from abattoirs, which had attracted small fish and the sharks that eat them.

Newer methods also have been introduced at beaches, such as drones and so-called smart drumlines, floating traps with hooks that snare sharks and alert officials so they can be released.

It's difficult to isolate the effect of an individual method.

Although the average number of shark bites in New South Wales fell after the nets were introduced, it has increased since 2016 to nearly the same level as before 1937.

Explaining this is challenging, partly because shark bites are so rare that scientists don't have enough data to draw definitive conclusions, said Charlie Huveneers, a professor who leads a shark ecology group at Flinders University in South Australia.

But, he said, it was likely a result of a mix of factors including population growth and climate change.

A 2024 study did not find a significant difference in shark bites at netted versus unnetted beaches in Sydney since 2000.

But that is not necessarily a gauge of the nets' effectiveness, said Huveneers, the study's lead author.

Two opposite outcomes could be true, he said: Either the nets did not kill enough sharks to make a difference or they did and therefore reduced bites at beaches with and without nets.

Over the past few years, several local councils in New South Wales voted to withdraw support for shark nets in favor of alternate methods, including Waverley Council, which administers Bondi Beach.

This year, Waverly was one of three councils that agreed to participate in a state government trial to remove one net from a beach belonging to each council.

Public opinion has been turning against shark nets in recent years, but the issue remains emotionally and politically fraught, especially after a shark attack, Pepin-Neff said.

"It's about blame avoidance," Pepin-Neff said. "It's not about risk, and it's not about sharks."

Could GLP-1 drugs make fat cats Ozempets?

Company launches study on medicines' benefits for felines

By Emily Anthes
The New York Times

This house cat in Boulder, Colorado, put on weight during the pandemic. **STEPHEN SPERANZA/THE NEW YORK TIMES 2022**

In just a few short years, new diabetes and weight loss drugs like Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro have taken the world by storm. In the United States, 1 in 8 adults say they've tried one of these medications, which are known as GLP-1 drugs, and that number seems sure to rise as prices fall and new oral formulations hit the market.

Fluffy and Fido could be next.

On Tuesday, Okava Pharmaceuticals, a biopharmaceutical company based in San Francisco, announced that it has officially begun a pilot study of a GLP-1 drug for cats with obesity. The company is testing a novel approach: Instead of receiving weekly injections of the drugs, as has been common in human patients, the cats will get small, injectable implants, slightly larger than a microchip, that will slowly release the drug for as long as six months.

"You insert that capsule under the skin, and then you come back six months later, and the cat has lost the weight," said Dr. Chen Gilor, a veterinarian at the University of Florida, who is leading the study. "It's like magic."

Results are expected next summer. If they are promising, they could represent the next frontier for a class of drugs that has upended human medicine and a potentially transformative treatment option for millions of pets.

Some veterinarians have already begun administering human GLP-1 drugs, off label, to diabetic cats, and Okava is not the only company developing a product specifically for companion animals.

"I think this is going to be the next big thing," said Dr. Ernie Ward, a veterinarian and the founder of the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention. Veterinarians, he added, are "on the precipice of a complete new era in obesity medicine."

Ward has provided informal, unpaid advice to Okava and several other companies interested in developing GLP-1 drugs for pets, but does not have financial ties to any of them, he said.

Still, the success of GLP-1 drugs in veterinary medicine is hardly preordained. Large clinical trials are still needed, experts said, and it's unclear whether the drugs will be affordable, or even appealing, to pet owners.

For "so many people, their main way that they interact with and show their love to their pet often revolves around food," said Dr. Maryanne Murphy, a veterinary nutritionist at the University of Tennessee.

Will pet owners pay for a drug that makes their animals eat less?

Recent estimates suggest that 60% of the nation's cats and dogs have obesity; hundreds of thousands of cats and dogs have diabetes, Gilor said. Better treatments are desperately needed, experts said.

Diabetic pets typically need insulin injections twice a day, every day. It's a costly, labor-intensive treatment plan and many pets are euthanized within a year of the diagnosis, Gilor said. "Diabetes is technically completely treatable," he said. "And we are doing such a lousy job treating it."

As for obesity, which can substantially increase the risk of diabetes, especially in cats, simply emphasizing diet and exercise has not worked much better for pets than it has for people. "We haven't moved the needle," Ward said.

GLP-1 drugs are designed to mimic a hormone called glucagon-like peptide-1, which stimulates insulin production, slows digestion and promotes a feeling of fullness. Some small studies suggest that the drugs might have similar benefits for pets and people.

Scientists have found, for instance, that some human GLP-1 drugs can also reduce appetite, improve glucose control and lead to weight loss in cats and dogs. (They can also cause familiar side effects, such as vomiting.)

"I do really see clear benefits," said Thomas Lutz, a veterinary physiologist at the University of Zurich who has studied GLP-1 drugs. "I think what's really missing are larger-scale clinical studies."

Still, the findings have been promising enough for some veterinarians to begin using human GLP-1 drugs off label. Dr. Andrew Bugbee, a veterinary endocrinologist at Texas A&M, said he uses the drugs "a handful of times a year" in diabetic cats.

But because there are no veterinary-specific formulations, pet owners pay the same price that human patients do, which is often hundreds of dollars a month. And existing drugs don't seem to work well enough to entirely replace insulin in diabetic cats, especially in those whose disease is advanced, Bugbee said.

Focusing on treating prediabetic pets with obesity may prove to be a more effective approach, he said, especially if companies can develop pet-specific products that are cheaper and easier for owners to administer.

Okava is trying to create just that.

"It is our belief that the condition of obesity, the condition of being overweight, is by far the No. 1 most significant preventative health challenge in all of veterinary medicine," said Michael Klotsman, the founder and CEO of the company.

Aware that a weekly injection would be a tough sell for many pet owners, Okava partnered with Vivani Medical, a biopharmaceutical company that had developed small, under-the-skin implants that could be filled with a monthslong supply of a GLP-1 drug.

Okava's product, containing a drug called exenatide, seemed to lead to weight loss in healthy cats in a small, proof-of-concept study.

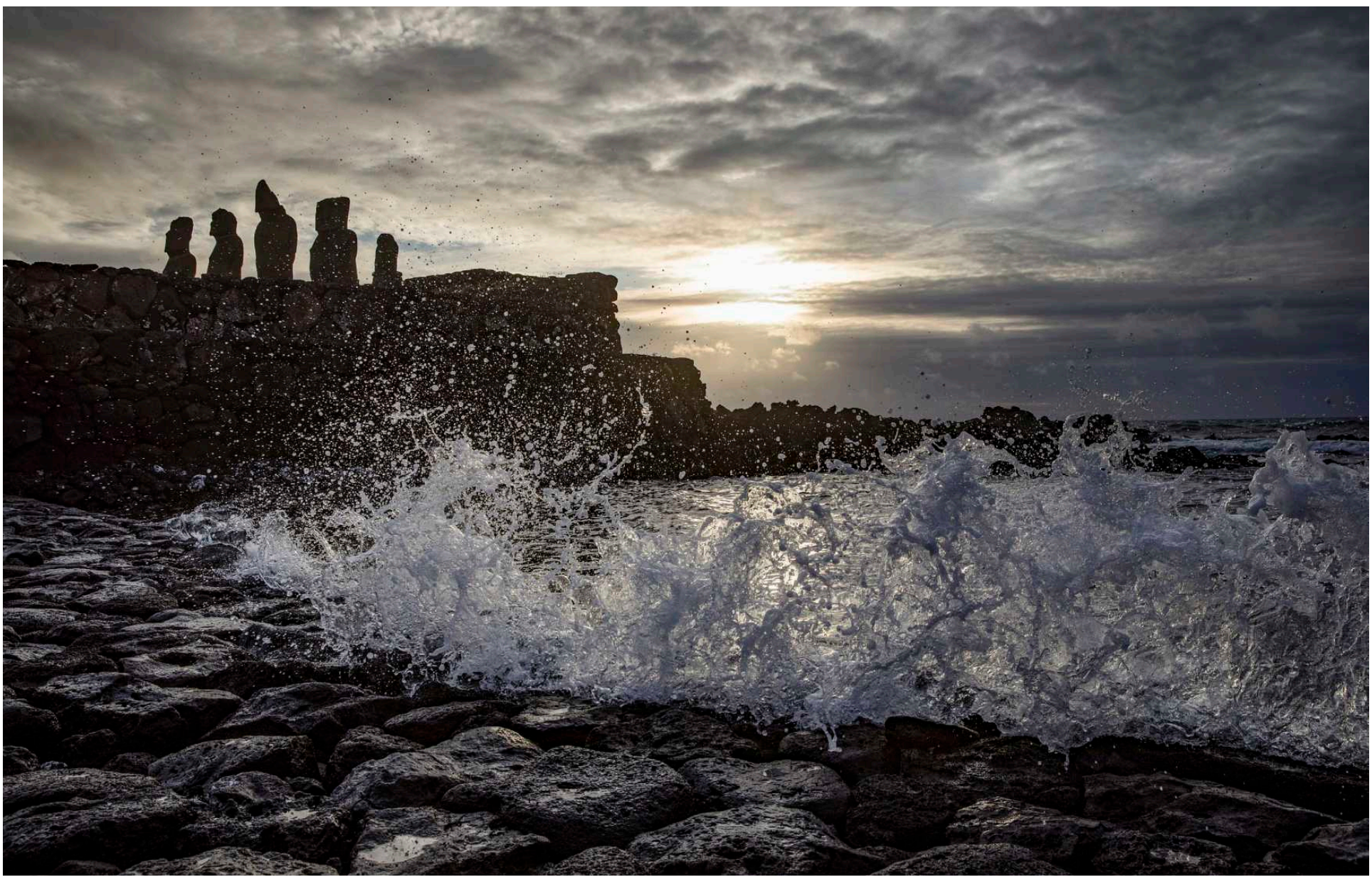
Now, the company is testing the implants in cats with obesity, in a larger, placebo-controlled study. (The study is called MEOW-1, for "ManagEment of Over Weight cats.") Okava hopes to enroll at least 50 cats, two-thirds of whom will receive the drug. The researchers will initially follow the cats for three months; owners will then be able to opt into a three-month extension.

If the results are promising, Klotsman said, Okava plans to launch a larger clinical trial next summer and apply for approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration within the next 18 to 24 months.

Okava's initial application to the FDA will focus on feline obesity, but the company also plans to study the drug's effectiveness in dogs, and for a variety of other conditions, including diabetes and chronic kidney disease. (Studies in humans, many still in the early stages, suggest that the drugs could have a wide range of health benefits.) Klotsman said he hoped that the company might even be able to position the product as a longevity drug.

To succeed in the veterinary market, developers will also need to address some of the practical challenges that have been associated with GLP-1 drugs, said Dr. Bethany Cummings, who studies GLP-1 at the University of California, Davis. One of the biggest ones, she noted, was "how to make it actually financially feasible."

Okava is aiming to keep the price of its product at or below $100 a month, Klotsman said, pointing out that some people pay more than that for high-end dog food. "We do think the market is there," he said.



Ahu Tahai stands on the coast of Easter Island, Chile. Scholars have debated how the massive stone figures of Rapa Nui got to where they stand today. **JOSH HANER/THE NEW YORK TIMES 2017**

Statues made for walking?

Study posits the monolithic stone figures on Easter Island were rocked into place

By Franz Lidz | The New York Times

A Rapa Nui crew raises a replica moai with pukao, still on a transport sledge, in Rano Raraku, Chile, in 1998. **EASTER ISLAND STATUE PROJECT**

You could say Rapa Nui is in the middle of nowhere, but it's even less central than that. Moored in the empty South Pacific, this barren outcrop of land, also known as Easter Island, is some 1,300 miles southeast of its closest inhabited neighbor and about 2,200 miles west of mainland Chile.

For centuries, scholars have been puzzled by the movement of the Rapa Nui moai, monolithic stone figures that represent deified ancestors. Between A.D. 1200 and 1700, the statues were hewed from compacted ash in a quarry inside the crater of the extinct volcano Rano Raraku, and then transported as far as 11 miles across rugged terrain; some reached 33 feet in height and weighed as much as 86 tons.

Roughly 950 moai have been discovered on the island. Most face inland with their backs to the ocean to watch over the villages, but seven on the west-oriented slopes of the Terevaka volcano are positioned to precisely face the sunset during the equinoxes, suggesting that the site once served as an astronomical observatory.

About 400 moai are still in the quarry, and 62 lie on the ground between the quarry and ceremonial platforms along the coast. All these numbers are hotly debated, as is the question of whether the 62 moai were abandoned in transit or purposely left at their sites.

In a recent study published in The Journal of Archaeological Science, Carl Lipo of Binghamton University and Terry Hunt of the University of Arizona demonstrated a plausible technique for how the statues were moved.

Fourteen years ago, the researchers' 18-person crew shimmied a 4.35-ton concrete replica over a 328-foot distance in just 40 minutes by using ropes attached to the sculpture's head, causing it to rock and shift its weight from side to side with each tug, gradually advancing it forward. This experiment called into question existing theories about moai transport and reinforced ones proposed in Lipo and Hunt's 2011 book "The Statues That Walked: Unraveling the Mystery of Easter Island."

The concept of moving a moai by walking it, inspired by oral tradition, was first successfully reenacted in 1986 by Czech archaeologist Pavel Pavel and Norwegian ethnographer Thor Heyerdahl. Their test runs were met with skepticism, primarily because detractors believed the method could harm the statues' bases, would not work on uneven ground and involved a 15-ton model that was not representative of all moai sizes. The walking-heads theory also lacked regional precedent. Despite these criticisms, Heyerdahl's fame as an explorer, combined with Pavel's engineering expertise, led to serious public and academic interest.

Giant steps

The new paper details how Lipo, Hunt and their colleagues created 3D models to understand how specific shapes and proportions would enable or hinder different transport techniques. This allowed the team to determine the ideal center of mass and stability needed for an upright, zigzag motion.

The study pointed out that road moai — statues discovered along what some researchers believed to be ancient transport paths, typically facedown on downward slopes and on their backs on inclines — shared distinct design features. These included wide, D-shaped bases and forward-leaning postures, which are physically optimized for rocking the giant sculptures, the researchers said. Lipo and Hunt proposed that damage such as side fractures could be the result of falls sustained by the sculptures during such walks, and that the guiding, concave design of the roads helped keep the wavering moai on course.

Lipo said the constant rocking and shifting of the moai over time wore down and contoured the prepared paths.

"Every time the Rapanui moved a statue, it looks like they made a road," he said. "The road was part of moving the statue."

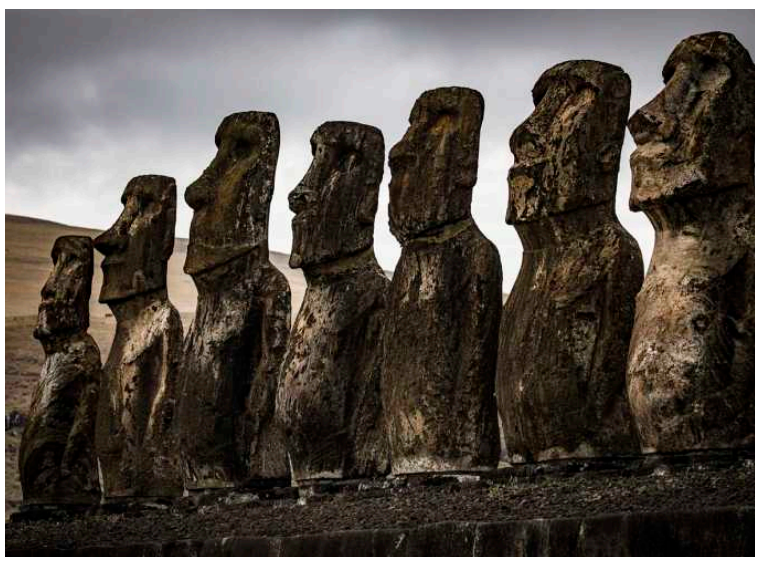
In the paper, the researchers present their work as "a vindication of experimental archaeology and a case study of scientific resistance to paradigm change."

But their research has faced pushback.

Nicolas Cauwe, curator of prehistoric and oceanic collections at the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels and author of "Easter Island: The Great Taboo," argues that Lipo and Hunt may have misinterpreted some of the evidence. Roughly half of the statues discovered along the paths are intact, and even the broken ones have fragments nearby. This suggests that the moai cracked while prone, rather than falling during transport, Cauwe said.

In his view, the narrow runnels caused by rainwater erosion indicate that the statues stood upright along the trails for an extended period — potentially decades or possibly more than a century. He also noted that the style of the road moai more closely resembled the statues found on the volcano's slopes than those erected on ceremonial platforms.

"Based upon these characteristics, it appears that the moai lying along the ancient paths have nothing to do with transport," Cauwe said.



The Rapa Nui moai were hewed from compacted ash in a quarry inside the crater of the Rano Raraku volcano. **JOSH HANER/THE NEW YORK TIMES 2017**

A flawed diamond

The popular perception of Rapa Nui was shaped by Jared Diamond's 2005 bestseller "Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed," which proposed a narrative of self-inflicted ecological disaster.

Diamond, now an emeritus professor of geography at UCLA, claimed that a rivalry among the islanders led them to construct massive moai, requiring logging of the island's once-abundant palm forests for transport equipment like sledges, rollers and ropes.

In Diamond's account, the resulting widespread deforestation caused soil erosion and famine. This environmental and food crisis ultimately led to a complete societal collapse marked by warfare and cannibalism, even before the Dutch arrived in 1722. This theory presents the Rapanui as a cautionary tale of a culture that consumed its own resources to extinction.

After the book's publication, doubts about Rapa Nui's ecocide spread among researchers, who voiced their concerns at conferences and in scientific articles.

Jan Boersema, an environmental scientist at Leiden University in the Netherlands, recalled that the concerns culminated in a consensus. "Scientifically, the collapse theory was dead by 2015," he said.

In a 2007 paper, Lipo and Hunt challenged Diamond's version of Easter Island history, instead suggesting that the Rapa Nui society was functional and thriving upon the arrival of the Dutch. They noted a lack of archaeological evidence for widespread warfare, such as fortifications or signs of violence among skeletal remains, common on other Polynesian islands. The obsidian tools found were consistent with agricultural use.

"The most deadly objects found on Rapa Nui, and certainly used by Rapanui against Europeans, are large rocks thrown at heads," Lipo said.

"Their work is hugely significant," Ethan Cochrane, an anthropologist at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, said of the quarter-century of research by Lipo, Hunt and their colleagues. "It has exposed the public parable of Easter Island and turned it on its head to demonstrate the people of Rapa Nui to be resourceful and inventive, making one of the most unlivable places on Earth habitable for centuries and creating some of the world's most recognizable monuments."

Not set in stone

Jo Anne Van Tilburg, an archaeologist at UCLA, began her fieldwork in Rapa Nui in 1982. She leads the Easter Island Statue Project, which is expected to release a 600-page academic atlas next March. This comprehensive study aims to link soil fertility, agriculture, quarrying and the sacredness of the moai.

Van Tilburg is a proponent of the horizontal transport theory, which argues that the moai were moved lying down, either on their backs or facedown. She posits that the Rapa Nui were resourceful engineers who used a single V-shaped wooden frame both as a sledge, moved with log rollers from the Rano Raraku quarry, and as a levering mechanism to raise the statues upright at their final destinations.

In a 1998 experiment, which proved that this method was feasible, Van Tilburg's team successfully moved a 10-ton, 14-foot-tall moai — a concrete mix cast in a fiberglass mold — using about 50 people over relatively flat ground and up an incline. A smaller crew then used levers to raise the statue onto a platform replica. The team initially tried eucalyptus rollers, but these jammed; they then modified the technique to lash the rollers to the sledge and slide the entire rig over eucalyptus rails. This technique was grounded in established Polynesian canoe-ladder technology. Regarding the walking theory, Van Tilburg said, "Just because something could be done, doesn't mean it was."

She did not discount a maritime alternative, citing 17 documented canoe ramps that could have been used to load statues onto rafts for coastal transport. Given the pros and cons of all theories, she suggested that the Rapa Nui were likely to have used whichever method was most practical at the time.

"Trying to encapsulate in one theory the range of human behavior and the complexities of a rich island culture history within a marginal island environment is rarely a good idea," Van Tilburg said.

NEWS BRIEFING

Defense chief defends US military strikes on suspected drug boats

From news services

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth defended strikes on alleged drug cartel boats during remarks Saturday at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, saying President Donald Trump has the power to take military action "as he sees fit" to defend the nation.

Hegseth dismissed criticism of the strikes, which have killed more than 80 people and now face intense scrutiny over concerns that they violated international law. Saying the strikes are justified to protect Americans, Hegseth likened the fight to the war on terror following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"If you're working for a designated terrorist organization and you bring drugs to this country in a boat, we will find you and we will sink you. Let there be no doubt about it," Hegseth said during his keynote address at the Reagan National Defense Forum. "President Trump can and will take decisive military action as he sees fit to defend our nation's interests. Let no country on earth doubt that for a moment."

The most recent strike brings the death toll of the campaign to at least 87 people. Lawmakers have sought more answers about the attacks and their legal justification, and whether U.S. forces were ordered to launch a follow-up strike following a September attack even after the Pentagon knew of survivors.

The speech was delivered at the Reagan National Defense Forum at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute in California, an event that brings together top national security experts from around the country. Hegseth used the visit to argue that Trump is Reagan's "true and rightful heir" when it comes to muscular foreign policy.

Escaped inmates: Authorities hunted Saturday for the last of three inmates who escaped from a Louisiana jail after removing concrete blocks from a deteriorating wall.

"We would prefer that he surrender himself peaceably," St. Landry Parish Sheriff Bobby J. Guidroz said in a statement, "but we will not rest until he is captured."

Detectives and SWAT officers were following leads Saturday in pursuit of Keith Eli, 24, who remained at large three days after he and two other inmates escaped the parish jail in southwestern Louisiana, said Maj. Mark LeBlanc, a spokesman for the sheriff. Eli had been jailed on a charge of second-degree murder.

One of the escapees, Johnathan Jevon Joseph, 24, was captured Friday following a brief chase.

LeBlanc said investigators following a tip found Joseph, who was jailed on charges of rape and other crimes, hiding out at a home.

Joseph ran to a nearby storage shed, where he surrendered after being cornered, LeBlanc said.

The third escapee, Joseph Allen Harrington, 26, killed himself with a hunting rifle Thursday after police found him at a home and used a loudspeaker to urge him to come out, said Port Barre police Chief Deon Boudreaux.

Before his escape, Harrington had faced several felony charges, including home invasion.

The sheriff said the breakout will be investigated internally.

SAfrica mass shooting: A mass shooting carried out Saturday by multiple suspects in an unlicensed bar near Cape Town, South Africa, left at least 12 people dead, police said. The victims included three children aged 3, 12 and 16.

Another 13 people were wounded and being treated at the hospital. Police didn't give details of the ages of those who were injured or their conditions.

Police adjusted the death toll after they said a 12th victim died in the hospital.

The shooting happened at a bar inside a hostel in the Saulsville township west of the administrative capital of Pretoria in the early hours of Saturday. Ten of the victims died at the scene and two others died at the hospital, police said.

The children killed were a 3-year-old boy, a 12-year-old boy and a 16-year-old girl.

Police said they were searching for three male suspects.

Migrant boat deaths: At least 18 migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea in an inflatable boat died when it capsized south of the island of Crete, Greek authorities said Saturday.

The half-sunken boat was located Saturday by a passing Turkish merchant vessel, authorities said.

Two survivors were rescued and a rescue operation to find more was ongoing.

Greece is a major entry point into the European Union for people fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East, Africa and Asia and fatal accidents are a common occurrence.

Authorities have not yet determined where the boat came from.

A ship and a plane from European border agency Frontex, a Greek Coast Guard helicopter and three merchant vessels are taking part in the search operation.

Deadly drone attack: A drone attack by the Sudanese paramilitary forces hit a kindergarten in south-central Sudan, killing 50 people, including 33 children, a doctors' group said.

Paramedics on the scene in the town of Kalogi in South Kordofan state were targeted in "a second unexpected attack," Sudan Doctors' Network said in a statement late Friday.

Emergency Lawyers, a rights group tracking violence against civilians in Sudan, reported in a statement Saturday the second strike on paramedics treating survivors in Kalogi and said "a third civilian site near the previous two" was also attacked.

The group condemned the attack, blaming the paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, for the strikes, calling them "a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, especially children, and vital civilian infrastructure."

The death toll is expected to be higher, but communication blackouts in the area have made it difficult to report casualties.

South China Sea flare-up: Chinese forces fired three flares from an island toward a Philippine plane undertaking a routine patrol Saturday in the disputed South China Sea, but the incident did not cause any problem and the aircraft proceeded with its surveillance mission, the Philippine coast guard said.

It was not immediately clear how far the flares that Filipino officials said were fired from the Chinese-occupied Subi Reef were from the Cessna Grand Caravan aircraft of the Philippine fisheries bureau.

Chinese officials did not immediately comment on the incident.

Beijing has claimed virtually the entire South China Sea, a key global trade route, and has vowed to staunchly defend its sovereignty.

The United States has no territorial claims in the sea passage but has patrolled the waters for decades and repeatedly warned it's obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces come under an armed attack.

Heavenly sounds: Pop singer Michael Bublé performs Saturday during the Concert with the Poor in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican. Pope Leo XIV welcomed artists, volunteers, guests and even joined the audience for the show. ANDREW MEDICHINI/AP

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2025

How to enhance your LinkedIn profile

Dreamstime

Making a good first impression is often critical in a job search. After all, when hiring managers are flipping through a long list of applicants, anything you can do to stand out – at least in a positive way – will help. Whether you like it or not, the social media platform LinkedIn has become one of the ways in which prospective hires are judged. It's considered the go-to source for a professional online presence, and having an updated profile is one of the easiest things you can do to show you're serious about getting hired.

There is, of course, a wide variety of opinions on what an "updated profile" means. Job seekers are often encouraged to use LinkedIn to build a personal brand or identity to help potential employers get to know them better. But for many people, that advice can be tough to interpret. Industries have conflicting expectations about what a LinkedIn profile should include, and job-seekers can be overwhelmed by expectations, particularly when their field of expertise doesn't involve social media.

That said, it isn't necessarily difficult to spend a bit of time making sure your profile meets a baseline level of acceptability. While certain professions may expect you to offer links to your work, most employers are looking for professionalism and thoroughness that can be applied to any job. In other words, show that you care enough about your future career that you put in the work to make a good impression.

Get the Basics Right

Start with the look of your LinkedIn page: Do you have a high-quality photo that represents you? It should be a recent headshot that makes you look good. While some opt for a professional photo, that isn't necessary for most people. This isn't the time for a shot of you in the distance or doing a distracting activity. Wear what you would wear at the job you're seeking, or at least something that makes you look professional.

In some fields, displaying some creativity with your photo can be beneficial, but if you're unsure how it will be interpreted, it's probably better to play it safe. Next, make sure the headline of your site – which most people use to list their current job title or occupation – makes sense for the jobs you're seeking. It doesn't have to be a specific job title, but it should highlight what best reflects your career.

Next, take the time to fill out the "About" section of the page. Use the opportunity to tell the story of your working career, highlighting the skills that you think stand out the most and the path you hope to follow. Here's a chance to be more creative and add some personality to your site. You can also use this section to promote the reason for creating the LinkedIn page in the first place. This could include a link to your website, an invitation to check out work you've done, or a simple line to connect with others in your industry.

Scroll through the skills section and click on the ones that apply to you. Try to find those specifically related to the job you're seeking. This isn't going to change anyone's mind about your abilities, but it does show engagement with the process.

Finally, go through and make sure all the experiences that you have listed match what's on your resume. Add any missing jobs or activities that you think would be of note in your field.

Grow Your Network

If you haven't been a regular user of LinkedIn, now's the time to seek out people you've worked with before to grow your network. Not only does it demonstrate your success at different stops on the career ladder, but in reaching out, you may discover new opportunities. If you're comfortable doing so, ask for recommendations and personal testimonials from people who are most relevant to your job search.

Once you establish a network, show some engagement. Share some recent posts, recommend people you know and follow influencers in your industry. You don't have to spend hours a day on this, but again, show a level of engagement that lets employers know that you're paying attention.

Early Career Importance

Some studies have shown that those with a strong digital personal presence (DPP) are offered higher salaries when hired. Research by Boris Groysberg and Eric Lin, which they wrote about in a 2023 Harvard Business Review article, suggests that those in the early stages of their career. They found that "those with only five years of professional work experience had a 5.2 percent higher pay associated with richer public profiles."

The influence diminished over time, however, as those with 15 years of experience found only a 1.9 percent bump with a strong DPP.

Their study illustrates the importance of a strong digital presence early in your career as you build a strong network.

– Jeff Banowetz

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Ideas to boost your job search

It can be intimidating to start a job search, especially at the beginning of your career. With a limited network and a shorter resume, many people don't know where to begin amid all the job listing sites now available. Here are some places you may want to start.

Take advantage of educational resources: Your college has a job placement office with lots of resources for current students, recent grads and alums. Take advantage of their listing services, but also reach out to a counselor. They will be able to guide you to the most up-to-date resources and can often recommend alumni who can offer sound advice in your field.

Join a professional organization: Most professional organizations not only host networking events but also typically offer a job board.

Create a wish list: Make a list of companies in your field that could offer you a job. Make it a long list – shoot for 30 or 40. Once you have the list, visit each company's website to find job listings. Reach out to the hiring team to request more information about employment at the company.

Join a young professionals group: Many chambers of commerce offer networking events for young members. Many charity groups also provide a way for young professionals to network while also giving back to the community.

Send an email: If there's a company that you know would be a good fit, reach out directly to the managers who work there to find out the best way to become part of the organization. Be polite and ask for advice, not a job. You'd be surprised how often you'll get a response.

Use industry-specific job sites: Take advantage of the big job listing websites, but also make sure you're visiting those that are specific to your industry. It's more likely that a job will be listed there first, and you'll show that you have enough knowledge about the industry to visit the right sites. Not sure what those sites are? Ask those in the industry (or college or high school counselors) to recommend some.

Do freelance work: In many industries, freelancing is a good way to get your foot in the door. Show a company that you're skilled and trustworthy, and you may be the first call when a job does open up.

Attend a job fair: Find events, often put on by municipalities, government organizations, colleges or trade schools that bring together a variety of employers in one place.

Listen to industry podcasts: Podcasts have exploded in popularity, and chances are that you can find several about your industry. The discussions can introduce network opportunities or new companies to explore. Reach out to the hosts for more information or tips for getting started on your career path.

Seek out start-ups: The job may not be as stable as you'd like, but start-ups typically provide lots of experience – and you never know, it may become the next big thing.

– Jeff Banowetz

Dreamstime

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY >>

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LEGAL >>

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CAREERS

Poinsettia facts

This is the time of the year that you start to see poinsettias pop up as part of the holiday decor. The U.S. spends more than $250 million a year on the plants, according to the USDA, nearly all of which comes in December. The plant was introduced to this country in 1828 by Joel Robert Poinsett, a congressman from South Carolina who was introduced to it while serving as minister to Mexico. Some other facts about the holiday favorite:

• Despite what many people believe, the plants are not poisonous. Some people are sensitive to the plant's sap, which contains latex, but it isn't toxic.

• The colorful part of a poinsettia isn't the flower but the leaves (technically called bracts). They actually have small yellow flowers.

• They aren't always red. There are more than 100 varieties in a range of colors, including those with white, cream, pink, purple, orange and yellow bracts.

• They require sunshine and long nights to bloom, which is how they became prevalent this time of year.

• California is the top poinsettia-producing state, but they are grown commercially in every state.

• Poinsettias in the wild are a woody shrub that can grow up to 15 feet high.

• Poinsettias are perennials, which means that they can bloom again if replanted after the holiday season. But those sold commercially will need a lot of care to make it through the spring and summer.

– *Jeff Banowetz*

Dreamstime

MANAGEMENT >>

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MARKETING >>

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How to be more assertive

It's something many of us struggle with at work: You want to get along with everyone, but too often that means keeping quiet instead of speaking your mind. Being assertive doesn't come easy to everyone. Yet it can be a critical skill for career growth. Good managers expect their employees to contribute their ideas – the company doesn't benefit if only the loudest people always get their way.

"Assertiveness can help you express yourself effectively and stand up for your point of view," according to a blog post from the Mayo Clinic. "It can also help you do this while respecting the rights and beliefs of others."

It can also be good for your own health. "Being assertive can also help boost your self-esteem and earn others' respect," according to the Mayo Clinic report. "This can help with stress management. It may especially help you reduce stress if you tend to take on too many responsibilities because you have a hard time saying no."

If you're one of those people who have a hard time asserting themselves at the workplace, here are some tips.

• Show confidence: Easier said than done, but have faith in your abilities and ideas. If you show confidence, other people are more likely to follow. Make eye contact and show strong body language to reflect that you are proud of your ideas.

• State your ideas clearly: Practice beforehand if you need to. Come to meetings prepared to make your point. If you find that aggressive colleagues aren't letting you speak, talk to the meeting organizer about getting your idea on the agenda – and you lead the discussion.

• Don't take pushback personally: Bold ideas typically result in pushback. This give-and-take is an integral part of honing a new procedure or innovation. Realize that this is part of a process and not targeted at you specifically. (If it does get personal, talk to a manager.)

• Be positive: Focus on moving the conversation forward with ideas for improvement. That's not to say you shouldn't be assertive about problems in the workplace, but try to frame them in a way that focuses on finding a solution.

• Practice: Start with smaller items if this is a big issue for you. Make a point of speaking up in a meeting or asking for more guidance on a project. You'll soon find that in most cases, it isn't nearly as difficult as you envisioned it to be.

– Jeff Banowetz

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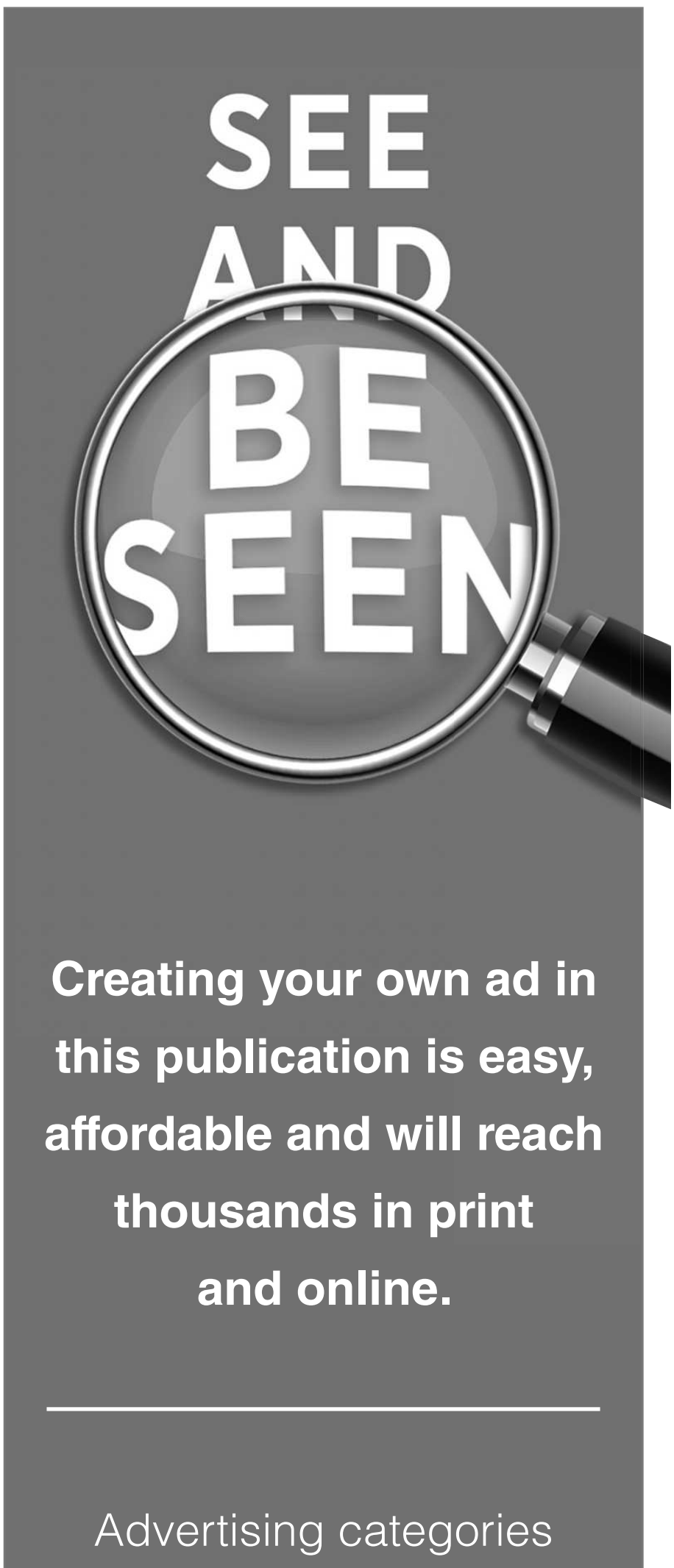

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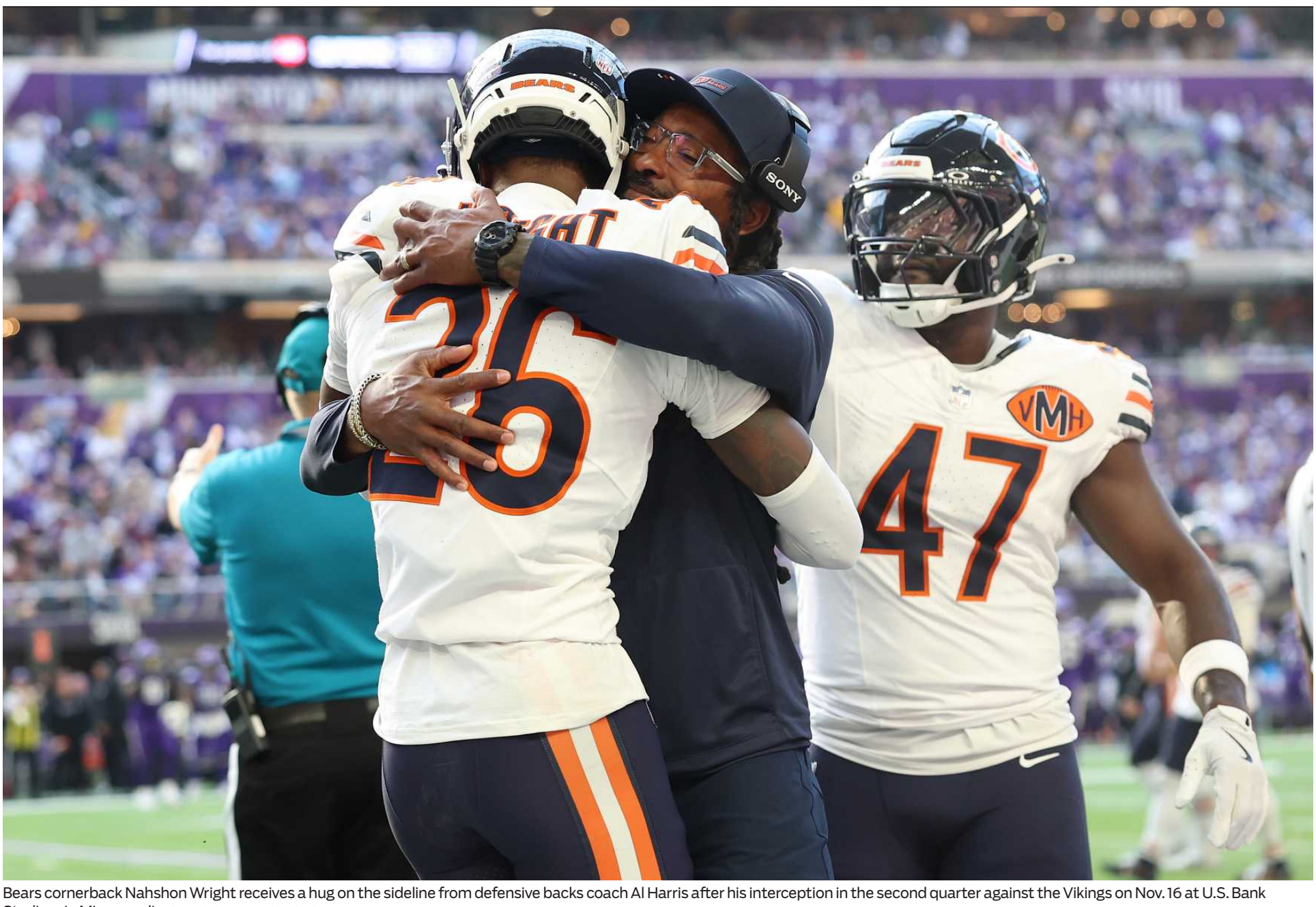


Bears cornerback Nahshon Wright receives a hug on the sideline from defensive backs coach Al Harris after his interception in the second quarter against the Vikings on Nov. 16 at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis. **CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

BEARS

Secondary to none

Wright's breakout season comes as he mourns his JUCO coach

By Sean Hammond
Chicago Tribune

In the mass of bodies, Nahshon Wright saw a sliver of dark brown leather.

"I just saw him holding the ball out with two hands," Wright said.

Jalen Hurts pushed his way into the pile on the Philadelphia Eagles' infamous Tush Push play. The Eagles needed a first down and were just 11 yards from regaining the lead on Black Friday in a game that felt as if it were about to turn in their favor.

Then the unheralded Bears cornerback, who wasn't even supposed to be a starter this season, flew around the pile and ripped the ball from Hurts' hands. Wright somehow worked his way to the bottom of the pile to recover the fumble.

The Bears took over and drove downfield for a touchdown that extended a one-point lead to eight. The Bears went on to close out a surprising victory over the defending Super Bowl champions at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia.

"That was one of the turning points in the game right there," coach Ben Johnson later said. "They're in scoring range and a high-percentage play for them, and yet he was able to get the ball away from them."

The Tush Push play marked Wright's third fumble recovery and his eighth takeaway this season, counting his five interceptions. He has been a difference-maker for the Bears in 2025 — and far and away the biggest difference-maker nobody saw coming. He started the season as a backup and got a chance only because of injuries at cornerback.

Perhaps most telling about the Eagles game was not Wright's

Turn to Bears, *Page 4*

Cornerback Nahshon Wright celebrates after the Bears defeated the Steelers 31-28 on Nov. 23 at Soldier Field. **EILEEN T. MESLAR/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

UP NEXT

Bears at Packers
3:25 p.m. Sunday, Fox-32

NFL BLITZ

Check out today's e-edition for our 4-page section previewing all of today's and Monday's NFL action. Scan code at left to access.

Wherever impactful DBs coach Harris goes, takeaways follow

Brad Biggs
On the Bears

Al Harris had a profound impact on the Bears long before being hired as defensive backs coach/passing game coordinator.

A two-time Pro Bowl cornerback for the Green Bay Packers, Harris is the assistant who was tasked with piecing things together while Jaylon Johnson and Kyler Gordon missed much of the season. He's the guy who vouched for Nahshon Wright before the Bears signed him in April — seven months before he was named NFC Defensive Player of the Month for November.

Defensive coordinator Dennis Allen put a wire cage — the kind you see in a physical education class — in the unit's meeting room to fill with footballs as the defense collected takeaways this season. With five games remaining, there isn't a lot of room left. The Bears have 26 takeaways and 17 interceptions — tops in the NFL in both categories — with Harris' defensive backs accounting for 13 of the picks and six fumble recoveries.

The story of Harris would have taken a much different direction if it weren't for Bobby DePaul and Indianapolis Colts general manager Chris Ballard, who in turn had their careers launched at Halas Hall because of their relationship with the player.

DePaul, now the college director for SumerSports evaluating NCAA football, was a young pro scout in Philadelphia when roster cuts were looming in August 1998. The Eagles were hurting for

Turn to Biggs, *Page 5*

Cubs might be ready to spend; Sox could shop in bargain bins

Paul Sullivan
In the Wake of the News

The start of MLB's winter meetings, the debate over Notre Dame-Miami for a College Football Playoff spot, the evolution of the World Cup into the Trump Cup and other things to ponder while counting down the minutes until the Bears hit the frozen tundra.

Baseball's winter meetings begin Monday in Orlando, Fla., and the Cubs and White Sox are ready to make some noise ... relatively speaking.

The Cubs reportedly made some news Saturday in their pursuit of starting pitching, but a viral tweet about closing in on an agreement with Zac Gallen was quickly retracted, and the Hot Stove League returned to its regularly scheduled crawl, already in progress.

Interest in Gallen makes sense, however, and his friendship with Cubs catcher Carson Kelly could pay off.

The Cubs missed out on the San Diego Padres' Dylan Cease, the former prospect they traded to the White Sox, though at $210 million for seven years, it's seemingly well beyond the Cubs' budget, especially if they want to add another hitter, such as third baseman Alex Bregman.

Cease's megadeal, and Devin Williams' three-year, $51 million deal with the New York Mets, suggest teams aren't all that worried about the possibility of a work stoppage after 2026, and are overpaying for pitching.

The Sox are reportedly bringing in left-hander Anthony Kay from Japan on a two-year, $12 million deal, so that's more noise than usual on the South Side. Kay, 30, had a 1.74 ERA in 2025 for the Yokohama Bay Stars, with 130 strikeouts and 41 walks in 155 innings.

It's a decent risk that at the very least could turn into some prospects at the trade deadline if he performs up to snuff and the Sox are out of contention. But if this is indicative of the kind of moves general manager Chris Getz plans on making, it's probably going to be a slow winter as he waits for free-agent prices to come down.

Notre Dame should be in the College Football Playoff, regardless of the results of Saturday's conference championship games.

For reasons not fully explained, the Fighting Irish dropped to No. 10 in the last regular-season CFP rankings despite a convincing win at Stanford, while Alabama moved up to No. 9. This was seen

Turn to Sullivan, *Page 6*

MORE COVERAGE
Will the Cubs acquire a top-of-the-rotation arm? Will any familiar White Sox faces be on the move? Three questions facing the teams entering the winter meetings.
Page 2

STACY REVERE/GETTY

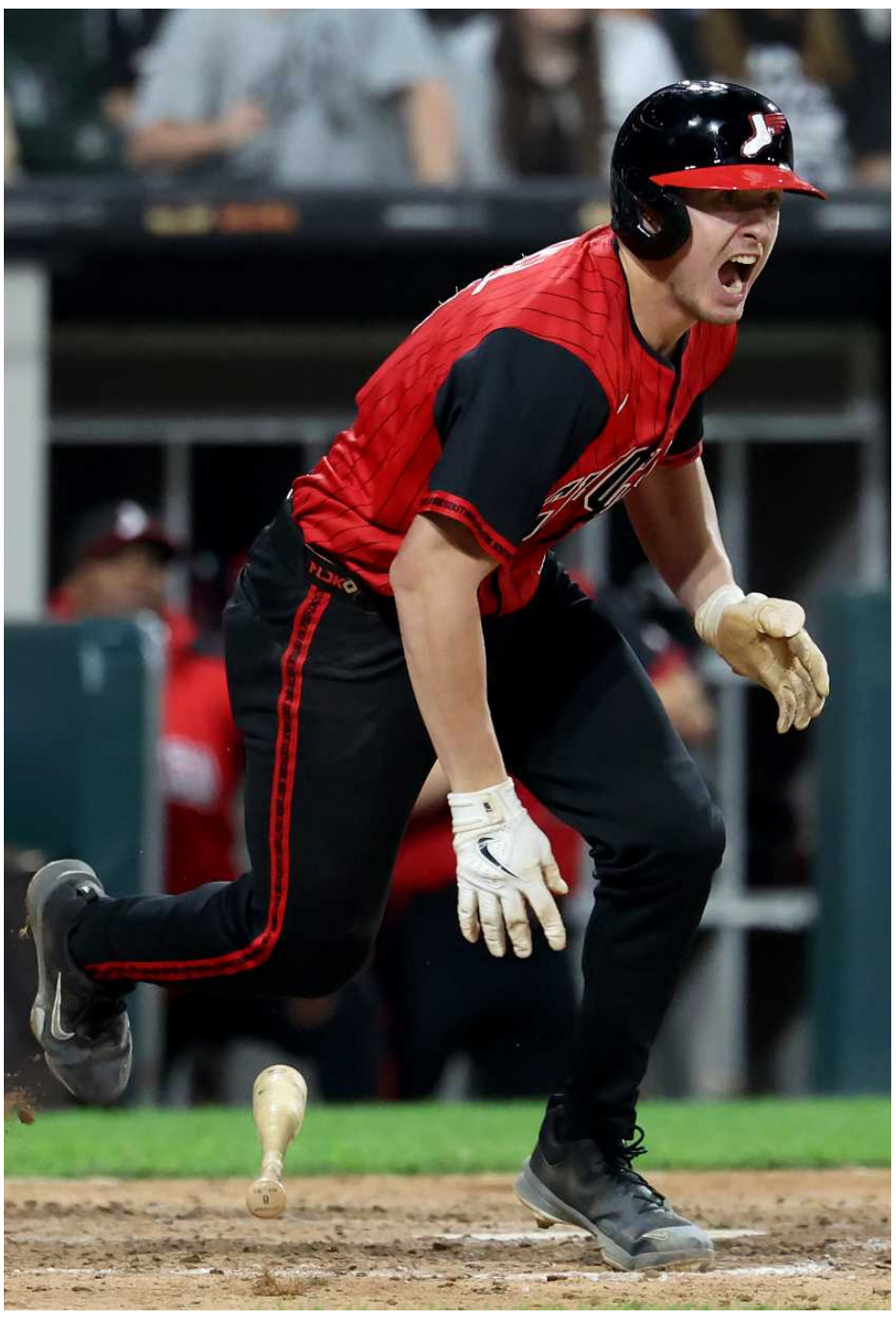
COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Selection Sunday

Players from No. 4 Texas Tech celebrate after defeating No. 11 BYU 34-7 in the Big 12 championship game Saturday in Arlington, Texas, for the school's first conference football title. The Red Raiders (12-1) are going to the College Football Playoff for the first time and with the victory likely locked up a first-round bye in the 12-team field. Meanwhile, No. 10 Notre Dame was off this week and awaits its fate, hoping to hold on to the last at-large bid.

SEC CHAMPIONSHIP
No. 3 Georgia 28, No. 9 Alabama 7
BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIP
No. 1 Ohio State vs. No. 2 Indiana, late
ACC CHAMPIONSHIP
No. 17 Virginia vs. Duke, late
AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP (Friday)
No. 20 Tulane 34, No. 24 North Texas 21
■ **CFP selection show:** 2 p.m. Sunday, ESPN
■ Coverage, **Page 3** and **chicagotribune.com/sports**

Team	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
BEARS	@GB 3:25 p.m. | Fox-32				
BULLS	GS 6 p.m. | CHSN				
BLACKHAWKS	@ANA 7 p.m. | CHSN+			NYR 6:30 p.m. | TNT	



White Sox catcher Kyle Teel reacts after hitting an RBI single against the Twins on Aug. 22 at Rate Field. **CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

WHITE SOX 3 QUESTIONS

Will there be familiar faces on the move?

By LaMond Pope
Chicago Tribune

General manager Chris Getz sees the makings of a more competitive White Sox team in 2026.

"We were able to make a significant jump from 2024 (to 2025)," Getz said during the GM meetings last month in Las Vegas, "and obviously it wasn't too difficult, given where our win total was."

The Sox collected 41 victories — while suffering an MLB modern-day record 121 losses — in 2024. They made a 19-game improvement to 60 wins in 2025.

"If you look at some of the production we've gotten from some of these players that have just gotten to the big leagues: (shortstop) Colson Montgomery and (catchers) Kyle Teel and Edgar Quero and (third/first baseman Miguel) Vargas taking a step forward and (starter) Shane Smith, their continued development is vital for us to add wins," Getz said. "And (in) addition to that, finding some free agents or other players from other organizations to help is a way to boost that win total."

Opportunities might arise for additions Monday-Wednesday at the winter meetings. Here are three questions facing the Sox ahead of the gathering in Orlando, Fla.

1. Will any familiar faces be on the move? One conversation repeatedly has popped up in recent offseasons: Will the Sox hold on to Luis Robert Jr. or will the center fielder be traded?

The subject came up again after the Sox exercised Robert's $20 million club option in November.

"To be able to have a player like that in your organization — and on the other end of the spectrum, that's why he's attractive (to teams), because they feel like they can use that boost as well," Getz said during a Nov. 19 videoconference call.

"It's very truthful that we are not shopping him, because we're very comfortable having him in a White Sox uniform, knowing what he's capable of doing. Now if it makes sense for both parties to work out a deal, then so be it. But we're planning on him being in uniform for us next year."

Every team aims to be strong up the middle, and Robert helps the Sox in that department. The team also has depth behind the plate, headlined by Teel and Quero.

Korey Lee rejoined the Sox from Triple A in late August. That gave the team the flexibility to start both Lee and Quero — one at catcher, the other at designated hitter — while having another catching option on the bench.

Lee was mentioned in trade speculation during the season. And Quero and Teel have drawn trade interest repeatedly.

Before that chatter, the topic of moving a catcher came up during the GM Meetings.

"Those are all conversations that we have," Getz said. "I can't say that there's a perfect answer right now other than catching is gold, and I've always felt that way. Nothing has changed on that front because catching markets on a regular basis — you guys have seen the names and teams that haven't been able to find production in that position.

"To have three guys who can be quality catchers at the major-league level. There could be a time for reallocation or repurpose to make the roster a little bit more functional. Is that time now? I don't think so. I don't. But down the road, you never know."

2. How is the pitching staff shaping up? The Sox have added a pair of left-handers to their staff this offseason, acquiring Chris Murphy in a trade from the Boston Red Sox and reportedly coming to terms on a two-year deal with Anthony Kay, who most recently pitched in Japan.

Smith and Davis Martin led the way for the Sox in terms of innings pitched in 2025. Sean Burke and Jonathan Cannon were next on the list, and Getz said the pair — who both saw some time late in the season in Triple A — will be competing for spots in the rotation.

"We have faith that both of those guys can be helpful and help us win games," Getz said of Burke and Cannon.

While it remains to be seen how the rotation shakes out, Getz said both Mike Vasil and Grant Taylor will remain in their relief roles.

At some point during the season, the Sox anticipate right-hander Drew Thorpe returning from Tommy John surgery. And two of the organization's highly touted prospects — lefties Noah Schultz and Hagen Smith — are inching closer to big-league debuts.

"You want to bring (Schultz and Smith) up when it's appropriate for them," Getz said.

3. What is the plan for the corner infield spots? The Sox have options for both first and third base.

Vargas led the Sox in starts at third (76) and first (55) in 2025. He topped the team with 80 runs, 32 doubles and 56 walks over a career-high 138 games.

Lenyn Sosa, who had a team-leading 22 home runs and 75 RBIs in 140 games, largely saw time at second base (99 games) and first (42).

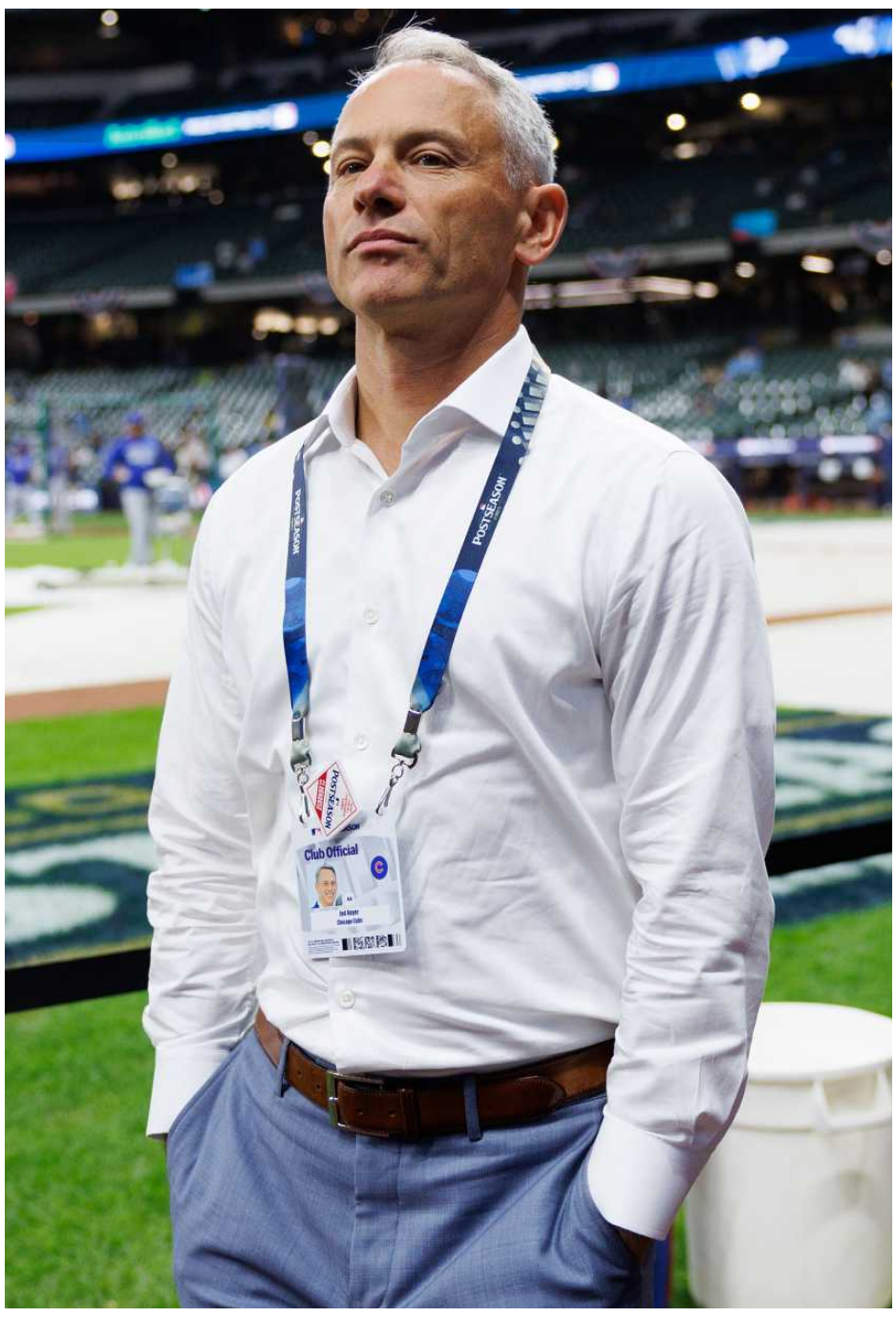
The Sox acquired Curtis Mead from the Tampa Bay Rays on July 31, and he hit .240 with 11 RBIs in 41 games, playing mostly third base (22 games) and first (13).

Vargas, Sosa, Mead and second baseman Chase Meidroth are right-handed hitters. Montgomery is the only left-handed-hitting infielder on the 40-man roster.

The Sox would like to have a little more balance in the group and are vying for another left-handed-hitting option.

"We have an ability to cover those positions and be fairly productive," Getz said of the corner spots, "but I think there's going to be some opportunity in just balancing that attack a little bit better.

"We've got some potential production there, but I think we can position ourselves a little bit better."



Jed Hoyer walks near the field before the Cubs play the Brewers in Game 5 of the NLDS on Oct. 11 at American Family Field in Milwaukee. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

CUBS 3 QUESTIONS

Will Cubs acquire top-of-rotation arm?

By Meghan Montemurro
Chicago Tribune

The Cubs still have a lot of work to do on their roster.

As the Cubs head to the winter meetings this week in Orlando, Fla., they have made only two moves: signing veteran reliever Phil Maton to a two-year deal and signing infielder Scott Kingery to a minor-league deal with an invitation to big-league spring training. The Cubs still need multiple relievers and ideally another significant starting pitcher while figuring out how they might replace Kyle Tucker.

There are multiple avenues the Cubs can take to improving a roster that fell one win shy of the National League Championship Series. They face three questions with the winter meetings approaching.

1. Will the Cubs give another reliever a multiyear contract? President of baseball operations Jed Hoyer has been on the record about preferring to avoid giving relievers multiyear contracts.

Bullpens are notoriously volatile, and while the Cubs struggled to put together a reliable group, especially their back-end arms, year to year, their 2025 pen became a strength. The Cubs built the group without committing multiple years to their high-leverage arms. That gives them flexibility for how they want to construct the 2026 version but also means they came into the offseason having only one or two puzzle pieces in place to envision what the bullpen could look like for manager Craig Counsell.

The Cubs gave Maton a two-year contract for the team's first move of the offseason during the last week of November. Will Hoyer and the front office be willing to give out another multiyear deal for a proven reliever? A willingness to do so would indicate the Cubs want fewer question marks in a bullpen that essentially returns only Daniel Palencia.

"It's not my favorite thing to do. I prefer shorter commitments in the bullpen, but I'll never say never," Hoyer said of multiyear contracts for relievers at the general manager meetings last month. "We offered some last year (and) we didn't win the bidding. So it's not a hard and fast rule, but you can guess that we're probably going to be more focused on shorter commitments."

2. How will they acquire an effective starting pitcher? Shota Imanaga's decision to accept the Cubs' $22.025 million qualifying offer sets up the 2026 rotation to look very similar to last season.

With Imanaga, Jameson Taillon, Cade Horton, Matthew Boyd and Colin Rea back plus Justin Steele on track to be ready early in the season following left-elbow surgery, the rotation on paper doesn't appear to be a need. The Cubs, however, could use an uptick in stuff from their starters. While they also will be looking to address pitching depth, there are paths the Cubs can take to acquire a top-of-the-rotation arm.

Ultimately, the Cubs must decide whether to pursue that in free agency or through a trade. Dylan Cease's seven-year, $210 million contract with the Toronto Blue Jays proved to be a level the Cubs didn't want to go to, though deferrals in the deal reduce the value of Cease's contract to $184.6 million.

They still have intriguing options. Japanese right-hander Tatsuya Imai, 27, was posted on Nov. 18 following a dominant run in Nippon Professional Baseball with the Saitama Seibu Lions. Among free-agent starters, left-handers Framber Valdez and Ranger Suárez and right-hander Michael King could fit what the Cubs need. In a trade, the Cubs have the pieces to make a potential move for Twins right-hander Joe Ryan and Nationals left-hander MacKenzie Gore happen — if those teams are willing to find more common ground than the high demands at the trade deadline.

A trade might make more sense for the Cubs to allow them to use their prospect capital and allocate their financial resources elsewhere on the roster.

3. Are they truly willing to roll with two rookies to replace Tucker? As Tucker explores his options in free agency and the Cubs not considered among the front-runners for him to return to Chicago, the organization sounds willing to give the star's at-bats to a pair of rookies.

Moisés Ballesteros and Owen Caissie are in line to get big-league at-bats should Tucker sign elsewhere. By shifting Seiya Suzuki back to right field, it would open at-bats for the young duo at designated hitter. It certainly would be a gamble for the Cubs to go with less proven options rather than acquire someone with a better major-league track record. Ballesteros impressed the Cubs by his approach in his limited action, while Caissie's dominance for two consecutive seasons with Triple-A Iowa has the team believing he is ready for the challenge.

As the Cubs continue to evaluate the free-agency and trade markets, they could instead look to find a way to better close the gap between Tucker and whomever they give his at-bats to. If the Cubs don't want to rely solely on prospects, third baseman Alex Bregman makes a lot of sense. Both sides were interested in each other during his free agency last offseason that landed him in Boston on a multiyear deal that had an opt-out he took after the season. Signing Bregman, 31, would allow the Cubs to move Matt Shaw around the field or make him a key piece of a trade to land a top starting pitcher.

Despite initially sounding inclined to look internally to replace Tucker, the Cubs have the flexibility to pivot and find a way to improve a lineup that was at its best when their star hitter was healthy and locked in.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Georgia running back Chauncey Bowens (33) runs past Alabama linebacker Justin Hill during the Southeastern Conference championship on Saturday in Atlanta. **MIKE STEWART/AP**

SEC CHAMPIONSHIP

Escape from their grasp

No. 3 Dawgs end No. 9 Tide's hold on rivalry to win the SEC

By Charles Odum
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Gunner Stockton and Georgia finally put an end to Alabama's mastery of the rivalry between Southeastern Conference powers.

Stockton threw three touchdown passes as the Bulldogs, ranked No. 3 in the College Football Playoff rankings, solidified their position for a first-round bye in the CFP and beat Alabama in the SEC championship game for the first time, pounding the Crimson Tide 28-7 on Saturday.

Stockton, who completed 20 of 26 passes for 156 yards and rushed for 39 yards, was named the game's MVP. It was the first victory over No. 9 Alabama for Georgia's fourth-year players, including Stockton.

"We approached it the same, like it was a big game, and didn't make it bigger than it was," Stockton said.

Georgia (12-1) had been 0-4 against Alabama in the SEC title game and 1-7 against the Crimson Tide under coach Kirby Smart. Playing in their fifth straight league championship game, the Bulldogs earned their fourth title under Smart and 16th overall.

During a team meeting at the start of the week, Georgia players who had a win over Alabama were asked to stand up.

"None of them stood up," Smart said.

Now the Bulldogs can stand. They also can brag about winning back-to-back SEC titles.

"I thought it hit right between the eyes of doing it for the seniors," Smart said.

The lopsided loss forces Alabama (10-3) to worry about its standing with the College Football Playoff selection committee. The Crimson Tide were believed to be in good position when they moved up one spot in last week's CFP ranking, but the loss to the Bulldogs provides renewed cause for concern that the Crimson Tide could miss the playoff for the second consecutive season under coach Kalen DeBoer.

"We fell short today, but I'm proud of our season," DeBoer said. "Getting to the SEC championship, getting to this great game, there's a lot to build off of."

Alabama will learn its playoff fate on Sunday.

"If this game applies to and takes away from our resume, I don't think that's right," DeBoer said. "I really don't."

Georgia led 21-0 before Alabama's Ty Simpson threw a 23-yard touchdown pass to Germie Bernard early in the fourth quarter.

Georgia will play a CFP quarterfinal game in the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans.

Georgia teams coached by Smart improved to 4-0 in second-chance games. The Bulldogs beat Auburn in their second meeting in 2017, Alabama in their second game in the 2021 national championship game, Texas in the 2024 SEC championship game and the Crimson Tide this season.

"We never quit," Stockton said. "We showed that every game."

Alabama posted the biggest comeback in SEC title game history when it beat Georgia 35-28 in 2018 after trailing by 14. It wasn't Alabama's only rally against Georgia. Before Saturday, the Bulldogs were 0-3 against Alabama under Smart when leading at halftime and 90-1 against all other teams.

This time, Georgia wasn't giving up the lead.

After Simpson's fourth-and-2 pass from the Alabama 12 was incomplete with 8:17 remaining, Georgia put the game away on Stockton's 13-yard touchdown pass to Zachariah Branch.

BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP

Raiders leave no doubt vs. Cougars

Texas Tech earns Big 12 title and likely first-round CFP bye

By Stephen Hawkins
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Once again, Jacob Rodriguez and Texas Tech were asked questions about all the money invested in their team this season.

The Red Raiders, ranked No. 4 in the College Football Playoff rankings, so far have gotten quite a return on those millions of dollars spent in the transfer portal. They have their first Big 12 Conference title and are going to the College Football Playoff for the first time, almost certainly with a first-round bye.

"If we are gonna buy a team, why not be the best," Rodriguez said after Tech's 34-7 win over 11th-ranked BYU in the Big 12 championship game Saturday.

"Man, I can't wait to see where the CFP is going to put us," fourth-year Tech coach Joey McGuire said. "We're looking forward to the bye. You know, we're hoping and expecting that's where we'll be."

Rodriguez had 13 tackles and Ben Roberts overcame an early injury scare with two interceptions in the second half when Tech (12-1) forced four turnovers while holding BYU to a season-low 200 total yards. The two linebackers have both played more than 40 games for a defense transformed by additions in the transfer portal.

Behren Morton, who made his 35th start but didn't play in Tech's only loss this year at Arizona State, threw two TDs to Coy Eakin and Stone Harrington kicked four field goals.

Texas Tech's Romello Height (9) celebrates with teammates after recovering a BYU fumble in the Big 12 Conference championship Saturday in Arlington, Texas. **JULIO CORTEZ/AP**

Texas Tech, one of only six schools that have been part of all 30 Big 12 seasons, likely prevented the league from getting a second team in the playoff.

"You can't make a lot of mistakes like we did. We've learned it again. That's the second time this year," BYU coach Kalani Sitake said. "I've said it before, I think they're the best team in the country and I'm confirming it. They're the best team in the country. It just so happens that we had to play the best team in the country twice."

The only losses by BYU (11-2) are to the Red Raiders, including 29-7 in Lubbock four weeks ago. The Cougars, who likely needed to be in the top 10 for a playoff spot, won't move up when the final CFP rankings come out Sunday. Roberts got his first interception with about 3 ½ minutes left in the third quarter when he reached up and deflected a pass by true freshman Bear Bachmeier. On the next play, Cameron Dickey took a direct snap and ran untouched 11 yards for a touchdown and 21-7 lead after a 2-point conversion.

Harrington, who kicked a school-record five field goals against BYU last month, missed a 49-yard field goal attempt after Roberts jumped a route to make a one-handed interception in the fourth quarter.

NOTES

Buckley leads Broncos to MAC crown

News services

Jalen Buckley had touchdown runs of 67 and 64 yards and Western Michigan won the MAC Championship, defeating Miami of Ohio 23-13 on Saturday.

Buckley's 67-yard touchdown burst on the third play of the game gave the Broncos the early lead. Palmer Domschke added three field goals in the first half, the last from 50 yards, and the Broncos led 16-6 at halftime. Buckley's 64-yard TD run made it 23-6 early in the third quarter.

In the regular-season matchup between the two, Miami scored 17 points in the fourth quarter, rallying to a 26-17 victory. This time, Western Michigan did not falter.

A couple of possessions after Miami closed to within 23-13 with 6 ½ minutes left in the fourth quarter, Western Michigan drove to the 1-yard line before turning the ball over on downs. Facing a 10-point deficit and 99 yards to go in less than two minutes, the RedHawks only reached their own 16-yard line.

Buckley finished with 193 yards on 19 carries for the Broncos (9-4). His career high was 196 as a freshman against Toledo in 2023.

Broc Lowry had 111 yards passing and 65 yards rushing for the Broncos, who had 286 yards on the ground, 397 total.

Kam Perry had 101 receiving yards for Miami (7-6) and the RedHawks managed 272 yards of total offense.

Both teams will play in a bowl, Miami for the ninth time in the past 10 seasons.

Among its five bowl alliances, the Mid-American Conference does not have a specific tie-in for its conference champion.

UCLA hires Chesney: UCLA hired Bob Chesney from James Madison as football coach on Saturday, hoping he can turn around a program that has struggled for years, including in its first two seasons in the Big Ten.

Chesney takes over from interim coach Tim Skipper, who guided the Bruins (3-9, 3-6) after athletic director Martin Jarmond fired DeShaun Foster on Sept. 14. Foster went 5-10 after taking over the program from Chip Kelly in February 2024. Skipper was hired as coach at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo on Wednesday.

Chesney becomes the 20th head coach in UCLA football history and the first sitting coach to be hired since Pepper Rodgers in 1971.

James Madison hires fired Florida coach Napier: James Madison has hired former Florida coach Billy Napier to replace Bob Chesney, who is leaving for UCLA but would coach the Dukes in the College Football Playoff if they make the 12-team field.

Napier, who was 22-23 in four seasons at Florida, was fired Oct. 19. Chesney, who coached JMU to a 12-1 record and Sun Belt Conference championship, was officially announced as UCLA's new coach on Saturday. The Dukes, No. 19 in The Associated Press poll and No. 25 in the CFP rankings, will find out Sunday if they are in the playoff.

"We are humbled and honored to accept this incredible opportunity to be the head football coach at the James Madison University," Napier said in a statement. "I've been blown away with the alignment & vision at JMU. There is dynamic leadership in this administration. Our team, staff and entire organization will work daily to promote a program with integrity and class that will be a source of pride for all of us. More importantly, we will build a culture that is centered around making an impact on our players as people, as students and on the field as elite athletes."

SEC pays tribute to late former Commissioner Roy Kramer: The Southeastern Conference paid tribute to former Commissioner Roy Kramer, who died on Thursday at 96, before Saturday's SEC Championship Game between No. 3 Georgia and No. 10 Alabama.

Kramer, a Vanderbilt athletic director before his time guiding the SEC from 1990-2002, reshaped college football by dreaming up the precursor to today's playoff system — the Bowl Championship Series. He also championed the SEC title game.

There was a moment of silence for Kramer, who was referred to as the "father of the bowl championship series," before the game.

Vanderbilt athletic director Candice Storey Lee said Kramer's leadership role in college athletics was unique.

"There are very few people who played as large a role in the growth of college athletics as Roy Kramer," Lee said. "At Vanderbilt, he had the determination to dramatically improve facilities and support services for student-athletes and to support new women's sports programs in the late 1970s and early 80s. As SEC commissioner, his vision for expanding the conference, creating the SEC championship game, and negotiating national television contracts set the pace across the NCAA."

Lee said Kramer "was a highly influential administrator, but always a coach at heart. He loved student-athletes and the games themselves. As much as things changed in the business of sports, the people and the games were what mattered most to him."

Bears

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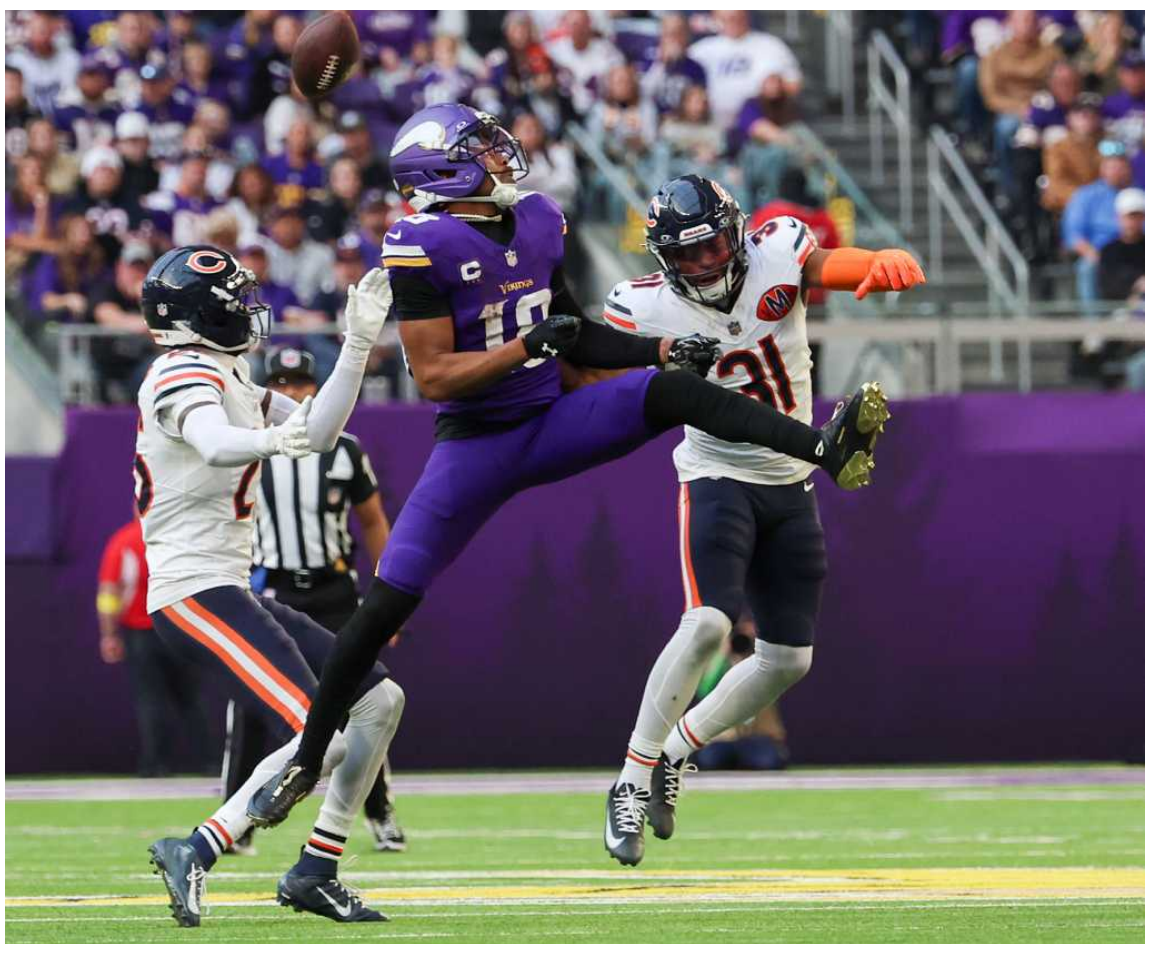
takeaway, but rather the fact he played the entire game — 100% of the defensive snaps — despite veteran cornerbacks Jaylon Johnson and Kyler Gordon returning from injuries.

Days earlier, when asked about the possibility that Wright's playing time might diminish when those guys returned, Ben Johnson was blunt in his assessment of Wright: "He's done a phenomenal job. I think he has certainly earned play time."

In a matter of months, Wright has gone from the relative obscurity of a backup defensive back on a team that finished last place in the NFC North a year ago to an indispensable starter on a team that is 9-3 and leading the NFC.

"I think when it's all said and done, I'll be able to look back and give myself a pat on the back," Wright said. "I mean, obviously I'm proud of what's been going on and what's happening for myself, but it's so week to week I haven't got to kind of soak it all in yet."

Bears cornerback Nahshon Wright celebrates after his interception in the second quarter of a game against the Saints on Oct. 19 at Soldier Field. **CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**



Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson is pressured by Bears cornerback Nahshon Wright, left, and safety Kevin Byard III during the second half at U.S. Bank Stadium on Nov. 16 in Minneapolis. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

'All the work we put in'

Al Harris is the reason Wright came to Chicago. Harris was the defensive backs coach when the Dallas Cowboys selected Wright with a third-round pick in the 2021 draft.

Wright entered the NFL after two years at Oregon State and one year of junior college football at Laney College in Oakland, Calif. His predraft scouting report on NFL.com included comments like "speed is lacking" and "very thin frame" with a projection that suggested he'd be a seventh-round pick or go undrafted. Instead, the Cowboys took him with the 99th pick.

Harris, now the Bears defensive backs coach, worked with Wright every single day after practice during those early years in Dallas. Wright hardly played for the Cowboys defense back then. He was stuck behind Pro Bowl corners Trevon Diggs and DaRon Bland.

Behind the scenes, Harris and Wright worked every day, particularly on tracking the football and on press coverage. Wright said it was hard to put in the work but not see any playing time on defense. He remembered a game against the San Francisco 49ers in 2023, when he was sidelined by an injury, that Harris reminded him to make the most of his next opportunity.

"It's just crazy to think that we had that talk two, three years ago and now it's kind of happening," Wright said.

Those were valuable years, despite the lack of playing time. Harris and Wright built a rapport. On top of that, Wright watched first-hand what it took for Diggs and Bland to develop into Pro Bowl selections.

"He's seen these guys become All-Pro, Pro Bowlers, lead the league in interceptions," Harris said. "So he knows the message. He knows the teaching. Just to his credit, from when he got in the league as a rookie and to now, his movements are night and day, the understanding is night and day. He's more confident."

The Cowboys traded Wright to Minnesota in August 2024, swapping him for cornerback Andrew Booth Jr. Wright spent the 2024 season on the Vikings practice squad. Even so, he kept in touch with Harris last year.

When the Vikings released Wright in April, Harris was the first person to call. Now, Wright has been thinking about that conversation two years ago, when Harris told him to make the most of his next opportunity.

"It didn't happen in Dallas," Wright said. "It didn't happen for me in Minnesota. It just so happened to happen for me now and I'm with Al. So it's crazy when you think about it — all the work we put in for those years."

Wright signed with the Bears on April 8. At the time, it was a free-agency footnote. Cornerback was one of the deepest positions on the Bears roster. Jaylon Johnson, Kyler Gordon, Tyrique Stevenson and top backups Terell Smith and Josh Blackwell all returned from the 2024 roster.

Wright's path to significant playing time looked unlikely.

'Stay locked in'

For veteran safety Kevin Byard III, Wright was anything but a footnote.

"Shonny was a third-round pick, so obviously the talent was always there," Byard said.

The NFL is a league of attrition. The teams that catch some luck in the injury department often are the ones playing into late January. A backup never quite knows when his big break will come.

Jaylon Johnson missed the preseason after injuring himself in preparation for training camp. Smith suffered a season-ending knee injury in August. Gordon tweaked his hamstring ahead of Week 1. Wright found himself in the starting lineup for the season opener against his former team, the Vikings.

"Just stay locked in because you never know what could happen," Wright said of his mindset.

Early in the third quarter, Wright lined up against Vikings star receiver Justin Jefferson — a player he matched up against all the time when he was on the Minnesota practice squad. Quarterback J.J. McCarthy looked left the whole way and Wright followed the QB's eyes. He jumped in front of Jefferson's route and grabbed an easy interception.

There was nothing but green grass ahead of him, and he ran 74 yards for a touchdown. It was his first interception in three years and just the second of his career.

A week later, Jaylon Johnson returned from a groin injury and started, pushing Wright back to the bench. But Johnson wound up reinjuring himself in the Week 2 loss in Detroit. The Pro Bowl corner needed core muscle surgery and would be out for an extended period. Wright was thrust back into the starting lineup and has never left.

When Washington Commanders quarterback Jayden Daniels fumbled a handoff late in a Week 6 game at Northwest Stadium, Wright was there to scoop up the game-altering fumble recovery. A week later he had another interception against the New Orleans Saints.

He had three interceptions in November, plus two fumble recoveries and a forced fumble (one being the Tush Push play in Philadelphia). That earned him NFC Defensive Player of the Month honors.

Little by little, week after week, Wright has put his stamp on a Bears defense that leads the NFL with 26 takeaways. Wright's five interceptions rank second in the league behind only Byard's six.

His production has blown away even the most optimistic of expectations.

"What I saw was, each and every day and each and every week during training camp, I saw a guy that continued to get better," defensive coordinator Dennis Allen said. "And I've said this before, anytime you've got a guy that's got talent and intelligence and they're willing to work, those guys get better. And that's exactly what he's done."

'I'll always remember him'

Wright and his junior college football coach, John Beam, were standing in Endless Supply, a shoe and apparel store on Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago. It was Oct. 18, the night before the Bears-Saints game at Soldier Field, which would feature Wright playing against his brother, Saints cornerback Rejzohn Wright. Both Wright brothers played for Beam at Laney College in Oakland, Calif.

Beam starred in Season 5 of the Netflix series "Last Chance U." One episode featured the Wright brothers discussing the death of their father, Jamal Wright, who was shot and killed in December 2017 in San Jose, Calif. In the aftermath of the shooting, Beam was there for the boys.

In the episode, Nahshon Wright recalled Beam telling him, "Everything you do, do it for your dad."

On this October evening, Beam and Wright were standing in Endless Supply shopping, but mostly just catching up. They had a big group of family, Wright's fiancée and daughters, his mom, Rejzohn's wife and his in-laws. As the family walked up and down the Magnificent Mile — Beam wanted to get his steps in — Beam and Wright caught up on everything: life, finances, football.

It was at Endless Supply that a group of young men approached them.

"What do we know you from?" one of them said.

He was talking to Beam, unaware that the taller guy was a starting cornerback for the Bears.

"They ended up taking a picture with him and not me," Wright recalled with a laugh. "On the walk we were joking about that: 'You're more famous than me, and I play.'"

Wright's journey to Laney was a roundabout one. Initially, coming out of James Logan High School in the Bay Area, Wright didn't want to go to Laney, despite the fact it was just up the road in Oakland. He first went to San Francisco City College, then transferred to College of San Mateo.

When his 1998 Acura couldn't handle the commute, he finally wound up at Laney with Beam. It was in the aftermath of his dad's death that he grew close with the coach.

A week or so after his dad's shooting, Beam was at Wright's front door, getting him out of bed.

"Beam stepped in," Wright said. "He stepped in as a father figure, father role. He did a lot for me and my brother, my family."

The Wright brothers won a state championship with Laney in 2018. Nahshon transferred to Oregon State in 2019. Rejzohn was still at Laney in 2019, the season that was featured on "Last Chance U." Even after he left Laney, Nahshon kept in touch with Beam weekly.

Just a few weeks after that walk on the Magnificent Mile in October, Wright saw a text from a friend after the Bears wrapped up practice. Beam had been shot on the Laney campus, where he had transitioned to the role of athletic director.

A chill went through Wright's body when he saw the text, the same chill he had experienced when his dad died. Something he hoped he would never experience again. Beam died a day later, on Nov. 14.

The news of Beam's death was everywhere. Beam, who was 66, left behind his wife, Cindi, their two daughters and two grandchildren. The mayor of Oakland called him "a giant" in the community. A 27-year-old man was arrested and charged with Beam's murder.

Wright tried to process what happened to his coach and prepare for a football game just days later in Minnesota. This time, he leaned on Harris.

"He was calling me by the hour just to check on me," Wright said.

"We talk outside of the building," Harris said. "Even when he was in Minnesota, we still stayed in contact, and it doesn't necessarily have to be about football. It could be the kids. All of that. When that happened, I felt for him because I knew how much that guy meant to him."

Fittingly, Wright grabbed another interception that weekend in Minnesota. When he caught the football in the end zone, the emotions hit him and he fell to one knee. On his way back to the sideline, he stuck out his thumb and pinky finger in a "hang ten" hand signal that Beam used to make whenever he took pictures with people.

Wright also shared a big hug with Harris.

"Every week I do get reminded of Beam, and every week I write his name on my tape," Wright said. "I'll always remember him. I'll always take him into every game."

'Teams gave up on me'

This season has bucked trends for the Bears. The team is 9-3 for the first time since 2010. The defense leads the NFL in takeaways for the first time since 2018.

The Bears have done it with a number of contributors over the weeks. None is more surprising than Wright. In Harris' eyes, this is kind of like Wright's rookie season — at least in terms of playing time. He has watched Wright's confidence grow with each passing week.

When Wright showed up at Halas Hall for training camp, his only goal was to make the 53-man roster. After the Eagles game, Amazon Prime Video analyst Richard Sherman — the longtime Seahawks and 49ers cornerback — came up to Wright and told him he was playing at a high level. When Wright was growing up, Sherman was the most famous cornerback in the league.

"I told him it was an honor, and he was like, 'No, it's an honor to watch you play,'" Wright said. "So it was definitely cool."

It has been a long journey for a player who didn't even know if football was still in his future when he first enrolled at Laney College all those years ago. Wright wasn't playing back then, so he got a job at Foot Locker on the side. But the coaches in his life — Beam and Harris — always have seen a potential that's now playing out on a national stage.

Wright hasn't had time to process what this year might mean for his career moving forward. There have been incredible highs and incredible lows on and off the field.

"It's definitely emotional, just the journey for myself," Wright said.

After the Eagles game, Sherman also told Wright to keep listening to Harris. That bit of advice was something Wright already knew.

"He's always believed in me and that goes a long way," Wright said. "I texted him (Wednesday) and I just told him, like, I appreciate him more than he knows, just because teams gave up on me in a sense, and it's cool to have someone like that who believes in you."

The Bears aren't giving up on him.

"To see him have the success that he does really warms my heart, it really does," Harris said. "Because I know what he's been through. I know how hard he's worked."

BEARS

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12	WEEK 13	WEEK 14	WEEK 15	WEEK 16	WEEK 17	WEEK 18
Sept. 8	Sept. 14	Sept. 21	Sept. 28	Oct. 13	Oct. 19	Oct. 26	Nov. 2	Nov. 9	Nov. 16	Nov. 23	Nov. 28	Dec. 7	Dec. 14	Dec. 20	Dec. 28	TBD
MIN	@DET	DAL	@LV	@WAS	NO	@BAL	@CIN	NYG	@MIN	PIT	@PHI	@GB	CLE	GB	@SF	DET
Loss	Loss	Win	Win	Win	Win	Loss	Win	Win	Win	Win	Win	3:25 p.m.	Noon	7:20 p.m.	7:20 p.m.	TBD
27-24	52-21	31-14	25-24	25-24	26-14	30-16	47-42	24-20	19-17	31-28	24-15	Fox-32	Fox-32	Fox-32	NBC-5	TBD

Biggs

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cornerbacks as Bobby Taylor was sidelined with a broken scapula. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who drafted Harris in the sixth round out of Texas A&M-Kingsville the previous year, were heavy at the position. DePaul figured a cornerback or two would be cut loose.

One young player got just a few snaps all of preseason. He rarely left the sideline.

"Very accurate," said that player, who happened to be Harris.

The Bucs were planning to waive Harris with the goal of re-signing him to their practice squad for the second straight year. A bump-and-run cornerback, he wasn't a great fit for coach Tony Dungy's scheme, but the team, and especially director of player personnel Jerry Angelo, liked Harris.

"Tampa had overdrafted so someone good was going to be cut," DePaul said. "Now, I am watching the tape and I got my eyes on them. I think Al may have played five snaps all of preseason. It was very few. It just so happened one of the plays was a go route. He was in press man. The guy tries to shake him. Al, who is over 6 feet and has the length, flips his hips and he turns and runs the guy out of bounds. Plays the ball. The whole thing. I said, 'Oh, my god, there is no way they are cutting this guy.'"

Director of pro personnel Mike McCartney, now a Downers Grove-based agent, was involved. DePaul said he floated the idea of offering a late-round pick to the Bucs for Harris. He described an almost Abbott-and-Costello routine in talking with Eagles GM Tom Modrak about a deal.

"I've never heard of this guy," Modrak said.

"Tom, everybody is looking for corners right now," DePaul said.

"Nobody knows who this guy is," Modrak said. "You got any tape?"

"I got a couple plays," DePaul said.

"What do you mean?" Modrak said.

"Well, he didn't really play," DePaul said.

"So now you're telling me the guy never really plays?" Modrak said.

"I only needed one play," DePaul said. "It just happened to be the play that showed me he could do it."

Modrak came up in the business as a scout for the Steelers in the 1970s when Dungy was a player in Pittsburgh. They had a relationship. There was a phone conversation, according to McCartney, also involving Eagles coach Ray Rhodes. Dungy recommended Harris as a good fit for the Eagles. Modrak decided to place a waiver claim.

"I've got the anxiety of a scout because I've got to wait it out," DePaul said. "On the one hand, I hope 10 teams claim this guy just to shove it up (Modrak's rear) because I'm pissed off he didn't trade for the guy, right? These are the emotions you go through. Then, I am thinking, 'No, I want the guy.'"

The Eagles wound up being the only team to claim Harris, leading Modrak to deliver a very direct "I told you so" to DePaul. Harris hit the practice field. Defensive coordinator Emmitt Thomas instructed a receiver to run a go route. Harris was in his hip pocket all the way downfield.

"Emmitt comes over to me and Harold (Carmichael) and he says, 'He's starting on Sunday,'" DePaul said. "It's a true story."

Rhodes and his staff were fired after the season. Andy Reid took over and with defensive coordinator Jim Johnson, Harris' career took off playing slot cornerback for one of the first defenses in the league to really lean into sub packages.

Bears pass game coordinator/defensive backs coach Al Harris celebrates with players late in the game against the Eagles on Nov. 28 at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

'A special place'

Fast forward to June 2001.

Angelo was hired as GM of the Bears and in one of his first moves, he chose DePaul to be the pro personnel director based on the time he sniped Harris from the Bucs. DePaul worked for the Bears for nine seasons and was instrumental in helping build the offensive line of the Super Bowl XLI team around center Olin Kreutz.

At the same time, Angelo hired Ballard as a college scout, giving him his first NFL job. Ballard had been the secondary coach at Texas A&M-Kingsville. Ruston Webster was the Tampa scout who covered the area, but the Bucs were pulling so many players out of the school — at one point in the late '90s, they had five Kingsville players on their roster — that Angelo started making the visit too. He was impressed by the work Ballard did with Harris and another cornerback, Floyd Young, who spent time in Tampa.

"Al made a big difference for a lot of us in our careers," said Ballard, who spent 12 seasons with the Bears.

A year later, the Bears nearly engineered a trade for Harris when Reid called looking to move up during the draft. DePaul and Ballard were excited, knowing he would be a good fit for defensive coordinator Greg Blache, but it didn't come to fruition.

The Eagles, stocked with cornerbacks in 2003, finally dealt Harris, knowing they soon would owe him a big raise. Reid shared with Harris a list of teams interested in him.

"He said, 'You can go to these other teams and there's no doubt that you will play,'" Harris recalled. "'But if you go to Green Bay, that is a special place.' I said, 'Say less, Coach.'"

He moved to outside corner in Green Bay and his play took off. Harris intercepted the Seattle Seahawks' Matthew Hasselbeck and returned it for a touchdown in overtime of a wild-card playoff game at the end of his first season. He had 64 pass breakups in his first four years with the Packers and was named to the Pro Bowl in his fifth and sixth seasons.

What is the first name Hall of Fame Detroit Lions wide receiver Calvin Johnson mentioned when asked who the toughest cornerback he faced in his career was?

"When I first came into the league, nobody liked playing Al Harris," Johnson told the "Pardon My Take" podcast. "We played him twice a year. We had Roy Williams at the time and he always hated play Al. And I didn't know nothing about Al until I heard Roy talking about him in the week before we played him. He was like, 'Man, all he does is put his hands in your face. The referee will let him get away with it.' I'm thinking, 'OK, I ain't got to worry about that. You're the No. 1 receiver. You got his ass.'

"Lo and behold, halfway through the game, they switch him over to me and I got a good taste of it. He was the one who I, not modeled my game after, but as far as the aggressiveness that it came with, the fight at the line of scrimmage, it was all tailored after playing against Al Harris because I knew the kind of fight and nastiness I had to come with."

Harris finished a seven-year run with the Packers in 2009, intercepting Jay Cutler in his first start with the Bears to seal a 21-15 victory at Lambeau Field in the season opener and, by that time, he knew he wanted to pursue coaching when his playing days were over even if it wasn't something those around him could foretell.

"I never thought he would be coaching," said Hall of Fame cornerback Charles Woodson, whom Harris teamed with for four seasons. "I joke with him all the time that I can't believe that the guy who only worried about who he was guarding in a particular game, or just playing right corner, would be one day leading a whole secondary and now is a passing game coordinator to go along with it.

"Not only that, but it shocks me that he would want to be a coordinator and/or head coach at some point. But judging by what his players say about him and the results he has gotten everywhere he has been, I now do not put anything past him."

Harris was inducted into the Packers Hall of Fame in 2020, one of four teams he played for over 14 NFL seasons. That's when he reached out to DePaul to thank him for the role he played in his career.

"Al said, 'I know what you went through as a scout,'" DePaul said. "'And for that to happen, it took a tremendous amount of faith in my ability not knowing who I was but it just reinforces to me how much the DNA on that tape matters. And that helps me as a coach.'"

Said Harris: "Anybody that took a chance on me, I am extremely grateful. Being in this business for so long, you know how it goes. Sometimes guys just need someone to believe in them or see the vision. I was grateful for that."

'A beautiful mind'

After an unpaid internship with the Miami Dolphins in 2012, Harris hooked on with the Kansas City Chiefs as an assistant defensive backs coach in 2013, reuniting with Reid, Thomas and Ballard, who was the Chiefs director of player personnel at the time. Harris became the secondary coach in 2016.

"It has been very rewarding to watch him from being a player in Kingsville to where he is now," Ballard said. "He worked very hard at becoming a great coach. The success he is having in Chicago is no surprise."

Harris landed in Dallas in 2020 with his former Packers coach, Mike McCarthy, and ran the secondary before adding the title of assistant head coach last year. His contract expired after the season, and before new Cowboys coach Brian Schottenheimer could consider retaining him, the Bears pounced. The connection? GM Ryan Poles was in Kansas City to witness Harris' coaching career take off.

The Bears considered it a coup, a huge addition for Ben Johnson's staff, and at Halas Hall, one source said Harris possesses "a beautiful mind." His physical playing style, after all, was a perfect fit for the vision Allen has for the secondary.

Wherever Harris goes, the takeaways follow. From 2013-18, the Chiefs ranked second in takeaways, tied for third in interceptions and first in defensive touchdowns. Over the last five seasons, the Cowboys were second in takeaways, third in interceptions and first in defensive touchdowns.

Asked for a commonality in the three teams and the takeaways, Harris launched into a long answer.

"No, no, no, no," he said. "If you're not coaching takeaways, you're not going to get takeaways. Everybody has good scheme. Everybody thinks they have good scheme. Places that I have been, I have been fortunate to work in a variety of different schemes — all good ones. But if you are consistently coaching scheme, all you're going to get is a bunch of guys that know the check to three-man, two-man and know the verbiage. You're going to teach that anyways. Once we get the initial teaching of the scheme, now from there on out I am never teaching guys to couple wideouts ever.

"I have a saying in the room: Unless you see somebody that was at the Last Supper, he's got an (offensive) scheme he has to run. So everything I am doing, I am defending their system. If you watch from Kansas City to Dallas to now, a lot of the times we're beating the receivers to the route, to the ball. It's because we're defending the scheme not so much the wide receiver. ... That way I'm never talking about knocking the ball down or anything like that. That's a given. If your eyes are in the right place and the mindset of taking the ball away is there, you're going to get the pass breakup. That's a given. The ending to each drill, the ending to each play in our minds is the takeaway."

'He's that guy for me now'

Harris began fostering a relationship with Wright before the Cowboys drafted him in the third round in 2021 with the cornerback sharing details of a phone conversation that covered everything but football.

"When I got drafted, I called him back and I'm like, 'You didn't tell me nothing or give him no hint," Wright said. "He said, 'The phone call in itself should have told you how I felt about you.'"

While Wright dealt with injuries in Dallas and other young cornerbacks emerged, Harris still believed in him. The coach was bummed when the team traded Wright to the Minnesota Vikings in August 2024. Wright occasionally sent Harris clips of him from practice last season in search of pointers.

When the Vikings released Wright on April 7, the first call he received was from Harris.

"He told me to call my agent and tell him to call Poles," Wright said. "They had a conversation and later that night I was on a plane."

On April 8, Wright signed with the Bears. As soon as one door closed, another opened. Sure, Harris had a lot of personal experience with Wright, but he was vouching for a player who had a thin resume, just like Harris once did when he was released in Tampa.

"He's that guy for me now," Wright said.

Twenty-four years later, Harris is still making an impact on the Bears.

Scouting report

Micah Parsons, Packers defensive end

Information for this report was obtained from NFL scouts.

Parsons, 6-foot-3, 250 pounds, is in his first season in Green Bay after the Packers engineered a blockbuster trade in August, sending two first-round picks and defensive tackle Kenny Clark to the Cowboys for him. Parsons received a four-year, $188 million extension in Green Bay.

He ranks third in the NFL with 12½ sacks and has been a closer for defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley, with eight of them coming in the fourth quarter or overtime. Parsons leads the NFL with 70 QB pressures.

"He's got the best closing speed in the entire NFL," the scout said. "When he gets on the edges of offensive tackles, the play is over. Everyone thinks about speed but he does have power. The get-off is the thing with him, and offensive tackles just cannot open fast enough against him. It forces them to set deeper than they want to, and when you do that, Parsons has a two-way go.

"He is relentless. There are some guys that make a lot plays late in the down because it takes them a while to get there. It does not take Micah long to get there. If you try to run out of the pocker and he's got a line — you're going down. He's a rare athlete and he's not Myles Garrett because that guy is Reggie White and there's no one else like him. But if you're talking about the second-best rusher in the league, it's this guy. I'd expect the Bears to try to help with tight ends, maybe use a lot of 12 personnel. They have to. The best thing for Green Bay will be is Rashan Gary and Parsons can get home and they can sit in zone coverage and then dare Caleb Williams to run out of the pocket, move with him and force him to throw into tight windows. That's got to be what they want to do."

PREDICTIONS

Brad Biggs (8-4)

Ben Johnson's running game has emerged as a wagon, and it will be fascinating to see how it performs in this matchup. The Bears rank No. 2 in the league, averaging 153.8 yards per game. The Packers run defense is tied for seventh, allowing only 98.3 per game. The Packers are the only opponent on the schedule — to date — that ranks inside the top 10 in run defense. Eight of the 12 teams the Bears have played currently rank 20th or worse. In part, that's because the Bears have run on them. It took a few weeks for the Packers offense to recover from the loss of tight end Tucker Kraft to a season-ending knee injury. This feels like it will be a close game, and last season's two meetings were decided by a total of three points. But from 2019 through 2023, a span of 10 meetings, the Packers didn't lose once, and the closest margin was seven points. **Packers 27, Bears 24**

Sean Hammond (9-3)

This is such a tough game to pick. The Bears running game has been electric, while the Packers run defense has been among the best in the NFL. Jordan Love has thrown just three interceptions, while the Bears defense leads the NFL in picks. The Bears keep winning, and it would be silly to doubt them now. Still, it has been nearly two decades since this franchise won back-to-back games at Lambeau Field. I like the Packers at home. **Packers 24, Bears 21**

Phil Thompson (7-5)

It's hard to see a path to victory for the Bears, though most thought the same of their Week 13 matchup against the Eagles. The Packers give up the sixth-fewest points per game and allow the eighth-fewest rushing yards per game (98.3), which is the Bears' bread and butter. Packers QB Jordan Love has a Jekyll-and-Hyde quality to him — just look at the last six starts — so a Bears upset is not unthinkable, just unlikely. **Packers 27, Bears 23**

Bulls guard Coby White drives to the rim against Pacers guard Andrew Nembhard in the third quarter Friday at the United Center. JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

BULLS TAKEAWAYS

White makes his return in Bulls' 6th straight loss

By Julia Poe | Chicago Tribune

The panic button is on the desk.

It might not be time to press it, but that day is coming soon. The first week of December is still early enough into the NBA season to allow hope or optimism or any other vein of positivity to stay alive for at least a few more days.

But the Chicago Bulls need to stare at that bright red button long and hard — for the rest of the week, for the rest of the month, until they figure out how to get back above .500.

Things are bad. They're not getting better. That became clear in the third quarter of Friday's 120-105 loss to the Indiana Pacers as half-hearted boos began to filter down from the 300 level of the United Center.

Matas Buzelis had just committed the 11th Bulls turnover of the game, chucking an entry pass well above the outstretched hand of Nikola Vučević. The error served as the second half of a demoralizing one-two punch after Josh Giddey stumbled out of bounds on the prior play, giving the Pacers the opportunity to push ahead 75-59.

Within minutes, the Bulls cut the deficit to three points. It didn't matter. They lacked the offensive firepower and the defensive fortitude to overcome an early Pacers lead built off errors and turnovers.

How does a team orchestrate a complete collapse against a four-win team?

Start by making seven 3-pointers in the first quarter, then let that shot disintegrate for the remaining three quarters. Accept the pace set by the defense rather than establishing an independent metronome.

Hyperventilate when guards Andrew Nembhard and T.J. McConnell hike up their shorts and get their hands active at the half-court line. Sling passes without purpose. Turn the ball over 18 times.

Allow the opponent to gouge three-lane thoroughfares through the paint. Don't rotate, then rotate too hard. Melt in the face of every Pascal Siakam isolation turnaround jumper. Foul. Foul again.

The Bulls have lost six games in a row and seven of eight to fall four games below .500 at 9-13. It isn't quite enough to squash hope entirely. But for Coby White, the first turning point of the season already has arrived.

"It's still a very long season," White said. "I've been through the ups and downs here for seven years now. The most important thing is we stick together through this. The season's always going to be filled with adversities. We got a chance to change the narrative right now. The most important thing for me is we don't let go of the rope and we do this thing together."

Here are three takeaways from the loss.

1. White and Giddey were reunited. The Bulls enjoyed a rare evening with four of their five starters on the court as White returned to the lineup after missing three games. The difference was immediate and obvious.

White relieves pressure on fellow guard Giddey to handle the majority of the team's ball-handling efforts. He poses an automatic threat on the perimeter that drags defenders out of shape on offense, clearing up more room for Buzelis and Julian Phillips to cut into space toward the rim. And at his best, White can defy the standard laws of physics, suspending himself in midair to bend a pass around a defender for a corner 3 or levitating the ball up and down and up again for a reverse layup.

In his first game back from another calf strain — this time in his left leg — White buoyed his team with 22 points and six assists. Most importantly, Friday's game reunited White and Giddey, giving the Bulls a much-needed look at their central star duo. White and Giddey had shared the court for only 95 minutes this season entering Friday's game.

But Giddey didn't balance out the other side of this equation. He scored only nine points, four of which came from the free-throw line. Giddey went 2-for-9 from the floor and committed five turnovers against six assists.

And White still wasn't a fix-all solution. The Bulls were still short-staffed at the point guard position because of the absence of Ayo Dosunmu, who is sidelined with a sprained thumb. This meant relying on Jevon Carter — who scored 14 points — to supply backup minutes at the position off the bench.

2. Zach Collins made his season debut. Collins also came off the injury report Friday after suffering a fractured wrist in the final game of the preseason, an injury that required surgery and a six-week delay to the start of his season.

The Bulls knew this would be a rusty start for Collins, who is typically one of the stronger rim defenders on the roster. The Pacers targeted the big man on defense immediately, taking advantage of his sluggish pace of play after a month-and-a-half on the sidelines.

Collins found some rhythm with his shot, hitting a kick-out 3 at the end of the first quarter for his first points of the season. He finished with eight points and six rebounds in 20 minutes, 34 seconds, filling in a necessary shift with fellow backup center Jalen Smith injured.

3. Steps forward (and backward) for Buzelis. One of the quiet high points of the game came from the second-year forward, who logged the second double-double of his career. Buzelis had 19 points and 12 rebounds, providing a dominant presence on the defensive glass.

Most notably, he went 9-for-9 from the free-throw line. This reflected Buzelis' improved ability to force his way downhill, inviting contact that forced the Pacers into fouling positions.

Of course, the game still came with growing pains. Buzelis was also one of the leading perpetrators in the team's early errors, coughing up a team-high six turnovers. This was partially a result of his heightened role as a ballhandler without the injured Dosunmu, Tre Jones or Kevin Huerter on the court, but Buzelis also made several rushed decisions at the rim, reflecting areas of needed growth as a playmaker.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL FCS PLAYOFFS
ILLINOIS STATE 29, NORTH DAKOTA STATE 28

Redbirds score 2 late TDs to upset No. 1 team

Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. — Tommy Rittenhouse connected with Daniel Sobkowicz for two touchdown passes inside the final two minutes and overcame five interceptions to help No. 17 Illinois State upset top-ranked and previously unbeaten North Dakota State 29-28 on Saturday in the second round of the FCS playoffs.

Rittenhouse's second 8-yard TD pass to Sobkowicz pulled Illinois State (10-4) within 28-21 with 2:44 left. On the ensuing possession, Jake Anderson strip-sacked Cole Payton, and the Redbirds had the ball back at the 23.

On fourth-and-goal with 51 seconds left, Rittenhouse threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to Sobkowicz, and the Redbirds converted a two-point conversion on a pass to Scotty Presson Jr.

The Bison (12-1) then drove near midfield, but Nathan Hayes threw an incomplete pass on fourth-and-7 to seal it for the Redbirds, who will move on to face the UC Davis-Rhode Island winner in a quarterfinal.

Payton threw a 73-yard touchdown pass to Bryce Lance on North Dakota State's first play from scrimmage. About 10 minutes later, Jackson Williams scored on a 52-yard punt return for a 14-0 lead. Nathaniel Staehling added a 73-yard pick-six midway through the second quarter to give the Bison a 21-7 lead.

Rittenhouse threw three interceptions in the first half before throwing an 8-yard touchdown pass to Sobkowicz late in the second quarter to get the Redbirds within 21-14 at the break.

Rittenhouse completed 35 of 52 passes for 249 yards. Victor Dawson scored on a 69-yard touchdown run in the second quarter and finished with 137 yards rushing for Illinois State.

Payton and Hayes combined for 6-of-19 passing for 120 yards. Barika Kpeenu's 4-yard touchdown run gave the Bison the lead at 28-14 with 12:38 left in the fourth quarter.

The Bison entered having won 14 straight in the series with a pair of playoff wins, including a 29-27 victory in the 2014 national championship game.

Ohio State's Christoph Tilly dunks during the first half against Northwestern at Welsh-Ryan Arena on Saturday in Evanston. GEOFF STELLFOX/GETTY

COLLEGE BASKETBALL
OHIO STATE 86, NORTHWESTERN 82

NU falls to 0-2 in Big Ten despite 32 from Martinelli

Associated Press

Brandon Noel scored 29 points on 13-for-15 shooting and Ohio State won its Big Ten opener with an 86-82 victory over Northwestern on Saturday in Evanston.

Ohio State (7-1, 1-0) used a 18-7 surge in the second half to take a 64-61 lead with 8:41 left before Northwestern's Arrinten Page tied it with a 3-pointer. Noel then scored the next four points on two free throws and a layup. The Buckeyes later pushed the advantage to 81-73 with 2:10 remaining.

The Wildcats pulled within 82-81 with 21 seconds to play before the Buckeyes sealed it from the free-throw line.

Bruce Thornton added 17 points and 10 assists for Ohio State, which shot 57% (35 of 61) from the floor. Amare Bynum chipped in with 11 points and Devin Royal scored 10.

Nick Martinelli had 32 points and eight rebounds to lead Northwestern (5-4, 0-2). Angelo Ciaravino added 14 points and Page had 13.

Martinelli scored 18 points and grabbed six rebounds in the first half to help the Wildcats build a 44-40 lead. Noel scored 10 points to pace the Buckeyes.

Up next

- Northwestern plays at home against Jackson State on Saturday.
- Ohio State hosts No. 14 Illinois State on Tuesday.

Sullivan

from Page 1

by many as a prelude to dropping Notre Dame out of the 12-team field as an at-large bid if BYU upset Texas Tech in the Big 12 title game to get an automatic bid.

That didn't happen, but there's still the outside chance Miami jumps over Notre Dame, based on their head-to-head matchup — a 27-24 Hurricanes win in Week 2 in Miami Gardens, Fla. Some prominent analysts are seemingly lobbying for it.

"They kicked Notre Dame's ass in the game," ESPN's Nick Saban said Saturday on College GameDay. Actually, Miami had 339 total yards in the game to Notre Dame's 314 and won on a late field goal with 64 seconds left, so it wasn't much of an ass-kicking.

ESPN personality and SEC apologist Paul Finebaum insisted the CFP committee would be "making a major, colossal mistake" if they pick ND over Miami.

But Notre Dame has won 10 straight by double digits and is ranked ahead of Miami in every poll. Miami lost two conference games to unranked teams and didn't make it to the ACC title game.

If the playoffs were held in September, Miami deserved to go ahead of ND. But this is December, and it would be criminal to drop Notre Dame for Miami, no pun intended.

Sportswashing is coming to America in 2026. Thanks, President Trump.

If there was any question about what next summer's World Cup celebration will look like, one only had to watch the World Cup draw Friday from the Kennedy Center in Washington.

The show reportedly was viewed by more than a billion people, most of whom waited an excruciatingly long time to find out which group their country or favorite team would wind up in for the 48-nation tournament that begins next summer in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

After awkward conversations between hosts Kevin Hart and Heidi Klum and unfunny video bits featuring FIFA President Gianni Infantino and retired English soccer player Rio Ferdinand, the world was subjected to an obscene display in which the obsequious Infante handed Trump a made-up peace prize.

The Trump administration has been blowing up Venezuelan boats accused of carrying drugs, leading to an investigation into possible war crimes, while also detaining at least 170 American citizens during raids and protests, according to Pro Publica, in its effort to deport illegal aliens.

FIFA handing Trump a peace prize would be like the NFL giving Antonio Brown its Man of the Year Award. It took sportswashing to a new level. The televised event was even partly sponsored by Aramco, the state-owned oil company that was part of the World Cup draw's graphics.

As many recall, the term sportswashing came in vogue a few years ago after Saudi Arabia started the LIV Golf tour. Pouring tons of money into a new league with big-name golfers was one way to try to clean up its reputation after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman allegedly ordered the killing and dismemberment of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

"If sportswashing is going to increase my GDP by 1 percent, then we'll continue doing sportswashing," the crown prince told Fox in 2023.

The kingdom recently engaged in a cousin of sportswashing — comedywashing — inviting a few dozen prominent comedians, including Hart, to perform in the country where freedom of expression is limited and an American was once imprisoned for more than a year for an old tweet criticizing the kingdom.

Like Trump, Hart has the Saudi seal of approval, so expect to see a lot of him in Fox Sports' World Cup coverage. With friends like Saudi Arabia and Infantino, rest assured this World Cup will turn into the Trump Cup, a monthlong infomercial next summer glorifying our stable genius on the world stage.

Tough day in the Big Ten. Top-ranked Purdue was throttled by No. 10 Iowa State 81-58 at Mackey Arena. No. 7 Michigan State was topped at home 66-60 by No. 4 Duke. Indiana, ranked No. 22, fell to No. 6 Louisville. With a few weeks left before conference play really heats up, it looks as if No. 3 Michigan is the team to beat.

SCOREBOARD

NFL

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

EAST	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
New England	11	2	0	.846	351	241
Buffalo	8	4	0	.667	337	259
Miami	5	7	0	.417	247	286
N.Y. Jets	3	9	0	.250	246	315
SOUTH	**W**	**L**	**T**	**PCT**	**PF**	**PA**
Jacksonville	8	4	0	.667	292	253
Indianapolis	8	4	0	.667	357	249
Houston	7	5	0	.583	263	198
e-Tennessee	1	11	0	.083	170	328
NORTH	**W**	**L**	**T**	**PCT**	**PF**	**PA**
Baltimore	6	6	0	.500	289	293
Pittsburgh	6	6	0	.500	281	289
Cincinnati	4	8	0	.333	280	374
Cleveland	3	9	0	.250	194	270
WEST	**W**	**L**	**T**	**PCT**	**PF**	**PA**
Denver	10	2	0	.833	284	218
L.A. Chargers	8	4	0	.667	277	252
Kansas City	6	6	0	.500	305	232
e-Las Vegas	2	10	0	.167	179	308

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

EAST	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
Philadelphia	8	4	0	.667	270	249
Dallas	6	5	1	.542	351	342
Washington	3	9	0	.250	262	323
e-N.Y. Giants	2	11	0	.154	279	367
SOUTH	**W**	**L**	**T**	**PCT**	**PF**	**PA**
Tampa Bay	7	5	0	.583	279	301
Carolina	7	6	0	.538	247	297
Atlanta	4	8	0	.333	243	276
e-New Orleans	2	10	0	.167	182	295
NORTH	**W**	**L**	**T**	**PCT**	**PF**	**PA**
Chicago	9	3	0	.750	313	307
Green Bay	8	3	1	.708	294	226
Detroit	7	5	0	.583	350	274
Minnesota	4	8	0	.333	224	281
WEST	**W**	**L**	**T**	**PCT**	**PF**	**PA**
L.A. Rams	9	3	0	.750	334	210
Seattle	9	3	0	.750	350	217
San Francisco	9	4	0	.692	307	269
e-Arizona	3	9	0	.250	265	303

e-Eliminated from playoffs

WEEK 14

SUNDAY'S GAMES
Cincinnati at Buffalo, noon
Indianapolis at Jacksonville, noon
Miami at N.Y. Jets, noon
New Orleans at Tampa Bay, noon
Pittsburgh at Baltimore, noon
Seattle at Atlanta, noon
Tennessee at Cleveland, noon
Washington at Minnesota, noon
Denver at Las Vegas, 3:05p.m.
Chicago at Green Bay, 3:25p.m.
L.A. Rams at Arizona, 3:25p.m.
Houston at Kansas City, 7:20p.m.
MONDAY'S GAME
Philadelphia at L.A. Chargers, 7:15p.m.
THURSDAY'S RESULT
Detroit 44, Dallas 30
Off: New England, Carolina, N.Y. Giants, San Francisco

WEEK 15

THURSDAY, DEC. 11
Atlanta at Tampa Bay, 7:15p.m.

SUNDAY, DEC. 14
Arizona at Houston, noon
Baltimore at Cincinnati, noon
Buffalo at New England, noon
Cleveland at Chicago, noon
L.A. Chargers at Kansas City, noon
Las Vegas at Philadelphia, noon
N.Y. Jets at Jacksonville, noon
Washington at N.Y. Giants, noon
Carolina at New Orleans, 3:25p.m.
Detroit at L.A. Rams, 3:25p.m.
Green Bay at Denver, 3:25p.m.
Indianapolis at Seattle, 3:25p.m.
Tennessee at San Francisco, 3:25p.m.
Minnesota at Dallas, 7:20p.m.

MONDAY, DEC. 15
Miami at Pittsburgh, 7:15p.m.

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC	W	L	PCT	GB
New York	15	7	.682	—
Toronto	15	9	.625	1
Boston	14	9	.609	1½
Philadelphia	13	9	.571	2
Brooklyn	6	17	.261	9½
SOUTHEAST	**W**	**L**	**PCT**	**GB**
Orlando	14	9	.609	—
Miami	14	9	.609	—
Atlanta	14	11	.560	1
Charlotte	7	16	.304	7
Washington	3	19	.136	10½
CENTRAL	**W**	**L**	**PCT**	**GB**
Detroit	19	5	.792	—
Cleveland	14	11	.560	5½
Chicago	9	13	.409	9
Milwaukee	10	15	.400	9½
Indiana	5	18	.217	13½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

SOUTHWEST	W	L	PCT	GB
Houston	15	5	.750	—
San Antonio	15	7	.682	1
Memphis	10	13	.435	6½
Dallas	8	16	.333	9
New Orleans	3	21	.125	14
NORTHWEST	**W**	**L**	**PCT**	**GB**
Oklahoma City	22	1	.957	—
Denver	16	6	.727	5½
Minnesota	14	8	.636	7½
Portland	9	14	.391	13
Utah	8	14	.364	13½
PACIFIC	**W**	**L**	**PCT**	**GB**
L.A. Lakers	16	6	.727	—
Phoenix	13	10	.565	3½
Golden State	12	12	.500	5
L.A. Clippers	6	17	.261	10½
Sacramento	5	17	.227	11

SATURDAY'S RESULTS
Brooklyn 119, New Orleans 101
Atlanta 131, Washington 116
Detroit 124, Milwaukee 112
Golden State 99, Cleveland 94
L.A. Clippers at Minnesota, late
Sacramento at Miami, late
Houston at Dallas, late

SUNDAY'S GAMES
Orlando at New York, 11a.m.
Boston at Toronto, 2:30p.m.
Denver at Charlotte, 5p.m.
Portland at Memphis, 5p.m.
Golden State at Chicago, 6p.m.
L.A. Lakers at Philadelphia, 6:30p.m.
Oklahoma City at Utah, 7p.m.

MONDAY'S GAMES
Sacramento at Indiana, 6p.m.
Phoenix at Minnesota, 6:30p.m.
San Antonio at New Orleans, 7p.m.

FRIDAY'S RESULTS
Boston 126, L.A. Lakers 105
Orlando 106, Miami 105
New York 146, Utah 112
Denver 134, Atlanta 133
Cleveland 130, San Antonio 117
Charlotte 111, Toronto 86
Memphis 107, L.A. Clippers 98
Indiana 120, Chicago 105
Philadelphia 114, Milwaukee 101
Detroit 122, Portland 116
Houston 117, Phoenix 98

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

WEEK 15

SATURDAY'S GAMES
Big 12 Championship, Arlington, Tex.
Texas Tech 34, BYU 7
MAC Championship, Detroit
Western Michigan 23, Miami (Ohio) 13
SEC Championship, Atlanta
Georgia 28, Alabama 7
ACC Championship, Charlotte, N.C.
Virginia (10-2) vs. Duke (7-5), late
Big Ten Championship, Indianapolis
Ohio State (12-0) vs. Indiana (12-0), late

FCS 2nd Round at Bethlehem, Pa.:
Villanova 14, Lehigh 7
FCS 2nd Round at Macon, Ga:
South Dakota 47, Mercer 0
FCS 2nd Round at Fargo, N.D.:
Illinois State 29, N. Dakota State 28
FCS 2nd Round at Nacogdoches, Texas:
Stephen F. Austin 41,
Abilene Christian 34
FCS 2nd Round at Stephenville, Texas:
Tarleton State 31, North Dakota 13
FCS 2nd Round at Missoula, Mont.:
Montana 50, South Dakota St. 29
FCS 2nd Round at Bozeman, Mont.:
Montana St. 21, Yale 13
FCS 2nd Round at Davis, Calif.: UC Davis (8-3) vs. Rhode Island (11-2), late
SWAC Championship, Jackson, Miss.
Prairie View 23, Jackson State 21

DIVISION II PLAYOFFS

Saturday's Quarterfinals
Kutztown 51, Frostburg St. 29
Newberry 31, Albany St. (Ga.) 24
Ferris St. 52, Minnesota St. 29
Harding 34, UT Permian Basin 28

DIVISION III PLAYOFFS

Third Round
John Carroll 10, Mount Union 7, 2OT
North Central (Ill.) 35, Wis-La Crosse 27
Wis.-River Falls 42, St. John's (Minn.) 14
Johns Hopkins 45, Salisbury13
Susquehanna 29, Eastern 0
Berry 31, Trinity (Texas) 23
Wheaton (Ill.) 49, DePauw 24
Bethel (Minn.) 35,Wis.-Platteville 24

FRIDAY'S RESULTS
Conference USA Championship at Jacksonville, Ala.
Kennesaw St. 19, Jacksonville St. 15
Sun Belt Championship, Harrisburg, Va.
James Madison 31, Troy 14
American Ahletic Championship at New Orleans
Tulane 34, North Texas 21
Mountain West Championship, Boise, Idaho
Boise St. 38, UNLV 21

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	GF	GA
Boston	30	17	13	0	34	96	94
Tampa Bay	28	16	10	2	34	88	73
Montreal	26	14	9	3	31	87	94
Detroit	28	14	11	3	31	87	99
Ottawa	28	13	11	4	30	87	92
Toronto	27	13	11	3	29	94	91
Florida	27	13	12	2	28	84	89
Buffalo	28	11	13	4	26	84	96
METRO.	**GP**	**W**	**L**	**OT**	**PTS**	**GF**	**GA**
Washington	29	17	9	3	37	101	75
Carolina	27	17	8	2	36	93	78
N.Y. Islanders	29	16	10	3	35	86	81
Pittsburgh	26	14	7	5	33	83	74
Philadelphia	26	15	8	3	33	79	74
New Jersey	29	16	12	1	33	84	89
N.Y. Rangers	30	15	12	3	33	81	78
Columbus	28	13	9	6	32	90	97

WESTERN CONFERENCE

CENTRAL	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	GF	GA
Colorado	28	20	2	6	46	112	64
Dallas	29	19	5	5	43	102	75
Minnesota	28	15	8	5	35	79	76
Utah	30	14	13	3	31	91	86
Chicago	27	12	9	6	30	85	78
Winnipeg	27	14	12	1	29	83	79
St. Louis	29	10	12	7	27	73	100
Nashville	28	10	14	4	24	74	100
PACIFIC	**GP**	**W**	**L**	**OT**	**PTS**	**GF**	**GA**
Anaheim	28	17	10	1	35	100	94
Vegas	27	13	6	8	34	83	79
Los Angeles	27	12	8	7	31	70	75
Edmonton	28	12	11	5	29	90	100
San Jose	29	13	13	3	29	82	98
Seattle	25	11	8	6	28	63	75
Calgary	30	11	15	4	26	72	88
Vancouver	28	10	15	3	23	81	102

NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

SATURDAY'S RESULTS
Colorado 3, N.Y. Rangers 2, OT
Florida 7, Columbus 6, OT
N.Y. Islanders 2, Tampa Bay 0
Boston 4, New Jersey 1
Calgary 2, Utah 0
Carolina 6, Nashville 3
St. Louis 2, Ottawa 1
Montreal at Toronto, late
Chicago at Los Angeles, late
Detroit at Seattle, late
Minnesota at Vancouver, late
Winnipeg at Edmonton, late

SUNDAY'S GAMES
Colorado at Philadelphia, noon
N.Y. Islanders at Florida, 4p.m.
San Jose at Carolina, 4p.m.
Pittsburgh at Dallas, 5p.m.
Columbus at Washington, 6p.m.
St. Louis at Montreal, 6p.m.
Vegas at N.Y. Rangers, 6p.m.
Chicago at Anaheim, 7p.m.

MONDAY'S GAMES
Tampa Bay at Toronto, 6:30p.m.
Buffalo at Calgary, 8p.m.
Los Angeles at Utah, 8p.m.
Detroit at Vancouver, 9p.m.
Minnesota at Seattle, 9p.m.

FRIDAY'S RESULTS
Winnipeg 4, Buffalo 1
Vegas 3, New Jersey 0
Dallas 4, San Jose 1
Utah 4, Vancouver 1
Anaheim 4, Washington 3, SO

TENNIS

WTA OPEN ANGERS ARENA LOIRE

Saturday at Arena Loire; Angers, France; hardcourt indoors
WOMEN'S SINGLES, SEMIFINALS
Tamara Korpatsch d.
Anna-Lena Friedsan, 6-3, 6-4.
Kamilla Rakhimova d.
#2Antonia Ruzic, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5.

WTA ECUADOR OPEN

Saturday at Club Jacarandá; Quito, Ecuador; outdoors, Red clay
WOMEN'S SINGLES, SEMIFINALS
Polona Hercog d.
#3 Leolia Jeanjean, 6-2, 6-2.
Luisina Giovannini d.
#8 Despina Papamichail, 6-4, 6-2.

AUTO RACING

F1 ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX LINEUP

After Saturday qualifying; race Sunday
At Yas Marina Circuit; Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.Lap length: 5.28 kilometers
Third session

POS	DRIVER	COUNTRY	TEAM	TIME
1.	Max Verstappen	Netherlands	Red Bull Racing	1:22.207
2.	Lando Norris	Great Britain	McLaren	1:22.408
3.	Oscar Piastri	Australia	McLaren	1:22.437
4.	George Russell	Great Britain	Mercedes	1:22.645
5.	Charles Leclerc	Monaco	Ferrari	1:22.730
6.	Fernando Alonso	Spain	Aston Martin	1:22.902
7.	Gabriel Bortoleto	Brazil	KICK Sauber	1:22.904
8.	Esteban Ocon	France	Haas	1:22.913
9.	Isack Hadjar	France	Racing Bulls	1:23.072
10.	Yuki Tsunoda	Japan	Red Bull Racing	1:23.083
Eliminated after second session				
11.	Oliver Bearman	England	Haas	1:23.041
12.	Carlos Sainz Jr.	Spain	Williams	1:23.042
13.	Liam Lawson	New Zealand	Racing Bulls	1:23.077
14.	Andrea Kimi Antonelli	Italy	Mercedes	1:23.080
15.	Lance Stroll	Canada	Aston Martin	1:23.097
Eliminated after first session				
16.	Lewis Hamilton	Great Britain	Ferrari	1:23.394
17.	Alexander Albon	Thailand	Williams	1:23.416
18.	Nico Hulkenberg	Germany	KICK Sauber	1:23.450
19.	Pierre Gasly	France	Alpine	1:23.468
20.	Franco Colapinto	Argentina	Alpine	1:23.890

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

HOW MEN'S AP TOP 25 FARED

No. 1 Purdue (8-0) lost to No. 10 Iowa St. 81-58. Next: vs. Minnesota, Wed.
No. 2 Arizona (7-0) vs. No. 20 Auburn. Next: at No. 12 Alabama, Saturday.
No. 3 Michigan (7-0) beat Rutgers 101-60. Next: vs. Villanova, Tuesday.
No. 4 Duke (10-0) beat No. 7 Michigan St. 66-60. Next: vs. Lipscomb, Tue., Dec. 16.
No. 5 UConn (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. No. 15 Florida, Tuesday.
No. 6 Louisville (8-1) beat No. 22 Indiana 87-78. Next: vs. Memphis, Sat.
No. 7 Michigan State (8-1) lost to No. 4 Duke 66-60. Next: at Penn State, Sat.
No. 8 Houston (8-1) beat Florida State 82-67. Next: vs. Jackson St., Wednesday.
No. 9 BYU (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Clemson, Tuesday.
No. 10 Iowa State (8-0) beat No. 1 Purdue 81-58. Next: vs. Iowa, Thursday.
No. 11 Gonzaga (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. North Florida, Sunday.
No. 12 Alabama (6-2) did not play. Next: vs. UTSA, Sunday.
No. 13 Tennessee (7-3) lost to No. 14 Illinois 75-62. Next: vs. Louisville, Tue., Dec. 16.
No. 14 Illinois (7-2) beat No. 13 Tennessee 75-62. Next: at Ohio State, Tuesday.
No. 15 Florida (5-3) did not play. Next: at No. 5 UConn, Tuesday.
No. 16 North Carolina (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Georgetown, Sunday.
No. 17 Vanderbilt (9-0) did not play. Next: vs. Central Arkansas, Saturday.
No. 18 Kentucky (5-4) did not play. Next: vs. NC Central, Tuesday.
No. 19 Texas Tech (6-2) did not play. Next: vs. LSU, Sunday.
No. 20 Auburn (7-2) at No. 2 Arizona. Next: vs. Chattanooga, Saturday.
No. 21 Kansas (6-3) did not play. Next: vs. Missouri, Sunday.
No. 22 Indiana (7-2) lost to No. 6 Louisville 87-78. Next: vs. Penn St., Tuesday.
No. 23 St. John's (5-3) beat Ole Miss 63-61. Next: vs. Iona, Saturday.
No. 24 USC (8-1) lost to Washington 84-76. Next: at San Diego, Tuesday.
No. 25 Arkansas (7-2) beat Fresno St. 82-58. Next: at No. 19 Texas Tech, Sat.

SATURDAY MEN'S SCORES

EAST
American 78, Md.-Eastern Shore 60
Boston College 67, New Haven 63
Brown 115, Elms 34
Colgate 94, St. John Fisher 51
Delaware State 75, Delaware 72, OT
Duquesne 84, Stony Brook 75
G. Washington 99, William & Mary 86
Holy Cross 70, Fordham 69
Howard 85, Bowie State 69
LIU 87, Lehigh 82
La Salle 69, Drexel 64
Le Moyne 78, Binghamton 63
Longwood 84, Morgan State 80
Providence 90, Rhode Island 71
Saint Joseph's 70, Temple 69
St. Bonaventure 77, Buffalo 69
UMBC 73, Bucknell 66
UMass 80, UMass Lowell 60
Wagner 92, Bryant & Stratton 36
Wake Forest 75, West Virginia 66
SOUTH
Akron 88, Tulane 71
Coastal Carolina 88, Winthrop 84
Eastern Kentucky 122, IU East 67
Elon 73, Wofford 52
Florida International 88, Jacksonville 65
Furman 79, Harvard 69
Georgia Southern 88, Gardner-Webb 84
Georgia Tech 79, Monmouth 67
Houston Christian 85, New Orleans 76
James Madison 68, Norfolk State 67
Kennesaw State 92, Georgia State 69
Liberty 92, Coppin State 50
Memphis 78, Baylor 71
Miami (FL) 88, Southern Miss 64
Murray State 81, Bellarmine 68
Nicholls State 74, Incarnate Word 67
North Carolina A&T 69, NC Central 54
North Carolina St. 75, UNC Asheville 63
Presbyterian 80, Morehead State 72
Richmond 86, Old Dominion 77
South Carolina 82, Stetson 51
SE Missouri State 74, Chattanooga 70
Tennessee Tech 87, West Georgia 59
Troy 101, LaGrange 47
UNC Greensboro 82, East Carolina 78
UNC Wilmington 70, Louisiana 63
USC Upstate 78, Western Carolina 67
Virginia 86, Dayton 73
Virginia Tech 73, George Mason 62
Western Kentucky 80, Evansville 79
MIDWEST
Boise State 77, Butler 68
Detroit Mercy 71, Cleveland State 59
Duke 66, Michigan State 60
Idaho 84, South Dakota State 81
Iowa 83, Maryland 64
Iowa State 81, Purdue 58
Kent State 111, Roberts Wesleyan 68
Louisville 87, Indiana 78
Loyola Chicago 73, Princeton 68
Miami (OH) 93, Maine 61
Michigan 101, Rutgers 60
Oakland 98, Toledo 97
Ohio 88, Marshall 81
Ohio State 86, Northwestern 82
Purdue Fort Wayne 79, N. Kentucky 77
Seton Hall 78, Kansas State 67
Utah Valley 82, Bowling Green 71
Valparaiso 98, Calumet of St. Joseph 58
W. Illinois 78, Hannibal-LaGrange 47
W. Michigan 83, SIU-Edwardsville 73
Wisconsin 96, Marquette 76
Youngstown St. 78, IU Indianapolis 55
SOUTHWEST
Abilene Christian 77, New Mexico St. 69
Arkansas 82, Fresno State 58
Prairie View A&M 124, Champion Chr. 62
Sam Houston 82, Texas Southern 70
Tulsa 98, Missouri State 74
WEST
California 67, Pacific 61
Colorado State 91, Colorado 86
Eastern Washington 90, Kansas City 66
Idaho State 93, Denver 79
Omaha 60, Portland State 55
Oregon State 81, Southern Utah 70
Vermont 65, Pepperdine 56
Washington 84, USC 76
Wyoming 93, Dartmouth 80

HOW WOMEN'S AP TOP 25 FARED

No. 1 UConn (8-0) did not play. Next: vs. DePaul, Sunday.
No. 2 Texas (9-0) did not play. Next: vs. Prairie View A&M, Sunday.
No. 3 South Carolina (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. North Carolina Central, Sunday.
No. 4 UCLA (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Oregon, Sunday.
No. 5 LSU (9-0) did not play. Next: at New Orleans, Sunday.
No. 6 Michigan (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Purdue, Sunday.
No. 7 Maryland (10-0) did not play. Next: at Minnesota, Sunday.
No. 8 TCU (10-0) beat UTEP 95-40. Next: vs. Jacksonville, Sunday, Dec. 14.
No. 9 Oklahoma (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Md.-Eastern Shore, Sunday.
No. 10 Iowa State (9-0) did not play. Next: vs. Northern Illinois, Sunday.
No. 11 North Carolina (8-2) did not play. Next: vs. Boston University, Sunday.
No. 12 Iowa (8-0) beat Rutgers 79-36. Next: at Rutgers, Saturday.
No. 13 Ole Miss (8-0) did not play. Next: at Kansas State, Sunday.
No. 14 Baylor (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. UTSA, Sunday.
No. 15 Vanderbilt (9-0) did not play. Next: vs. South Florida, Mon., Dec. 15.
No. 16 USC (6-2) did not play. Next: vs. No. 21 Washington, Sunday.
No. 17 Kentucky (9-1) did not play. Next: vs. Central Michigan, Sunday.
No. 18 Notre Dame (5-2) did not play. Next: at Florida State, Sunday.
No. 19 Tennessee (6-2) did not play. Next: vs. Winthrop, Sunday, Dec. 14.
No. 20 Michigan State (8-0) did not play. Next: at Wisconsin, Sunday.
No. 21 Washington (8-0) did not play. Next: at No. 16 USC, Sunday.
No. 22 Louisville (7-3) did not play. Next: vs. New Hampshire, Sunday.
No. 23 Ohio State (6-1) did not play. Next: at Northwestern, Sunday.
No. 24 Oklahoma St. (10-1) beat MVSU 133-46. Next: vs. No. 9 Oklahoma, Sat.
No. 25 West Virginia (7-2) did not play. Next: vs. Georgia Tech, Thursday.

SOCCER

MLS CUP CHAMPIONSHIP

Saturday's match
Inter Miami CF 3, Vancouver 1

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

SATURDAY'S MATCHES
Aston Villa 2, Arsenal 1
Bournemouth 0, Chelsea 0
Everton 3, Nottingham Forest 0
Man City 3, Sunderland 0
Newcastle 2, Burnley 1
Tottenham 2, Brentford 0
Leeds 3, Liverpool 3

SUNDAY'S MATCHES
Brighton vs. West Ham, 8a.m.
Fulham vs. Crystal Palace, 10:30a.m.

MONDAY'S MATCH
Wolverhampton vs. Man United, 2p.m.

GOLF

PGA TOUR
HERO WORLD CHALLENGE

3rd of 4 rounds at Albany; Nassau, Bahamas; 7,449 yards; Par: 72

Sepp Straka	66-69-64—199	-17
Scottie Scheffler	66-69-65—200	-16
Hideki Matsuyama	68-66-68—202	-14
Alex Noren	69-66-67—202	-14
Wyndham Clark	66-68-69—203	-13
J.J. Spaun	66-68-69—203	-13
Justin Rose	68-68-68—204	-12
Cameron Young	70-64-70—204	-12
Sam Burns	71-70-65—206	-10
Corey Conners	67-70-69—206	-10
Harris English	70-67-69—206	-10
Akshay Bhatia	66-68-74—208	-8
Keegan Bradley	67-72-69—208	-8
Billy Horschel	71-68-69—208	-8
Robert MacIntyre	73-67-69—209	-7
Brian Harman	72-70-71—213	-3
Andrew Novak	68-72-73—213	-3
Aaron Rai	71-71-71—213	-3
Jordan Spieth	72-73-70—215	-1
Chris Gotterup	74-73-74—221	+5

SKECHERS WORLD CHAMPIONS CUP

Late Friday at Feather Sound Country Club; Clearwater, Fla.

Overall Points		Europe	109.5
United States	108	International	106.5
Friday Six Ball		Europe	30
United States	27	International	24
Friday Scotch Sixsomes			
International	30	United States	28.5
Europe	22.5		

NEDBANK GOLF CHALLENGE

3rd of 4 rounds at Gary Player CC; Sun City, South Africa; 7,885 yards; Par: 72

Kristoffer Reitan	63-69-67—199	-17
Jayden Trey Schaper	70-68-66—204	-12
C. Bezuidenhout	70-65-71—206	-10
Dan Bradbury	69-70-67—206	-10
Ewen Ferguson	69-70-69—208	-8
Garrick Higgo	68-69-71—208	-8
Hao-Tong Li	68-72-68—208	-8
Joost Luiten	72-71-65—208	-8
Andy Sullivan	70-67-71—208	-8
Angel Ayora Fanegas	73-66-70—209	-7
Julien Guerrier	68-67-74—209	-7
Francesco Molinari	72-68-69—209	-7
Shaun Norris	68-72-69—209	-7
Adrien Saddier	66-67-76—209	-7
Daniel Van Tonder	70-67-72—209	-7
Tom McKibbin	68-74-68—210	-6
Thomas Detry	68-73-70—211	-5
Junghwan Lee	69-68-74—211	-5
Jordan L. Smith	73-68-70—211	-5
Marcus Armitage	66-73-73—212	-4
Alejandro Del Rey	70-70-72—212	-4
Calum Hill	77-67-68—212	-4
Jorge Campillo	69-72-72—213	-3
Grant Forrest	71-71-71—213	-3
Viktor Hovland	69-70-74—213	-3
John Parry	72-70-71—213	-3
Nick Taylor	70-72-71—213	-3
Ryggs Johnston	71-71-72—214	-2
Thriston Lawrence	69-71-74—214	-2
Aldrich Potgieter	69-71-74—214	-2
Will Zalatoris	75-71-68—214	-2
Richard Mansell	72-70-73—215	-1
Pablo Larrazabal	72-70-74—216	E
David Ravetto	73-69-74—216	E
Jesper Svensson	66-74-76—216	E

CROWN AUSTRALIAN OPEN

3rd of 4 rounds at Royal Melbourne GC; Melbourne, Australia; 7,086 yards; Par: 71

R. Neergaard-Petersen	67-66-66—199	-14
Si Woo Kim	70-66-65—201	-12
Carlos Ortiz	65-70-66—201	-12
Cameron Smith	70-65-66—201	-12
Josele Ballester	69-68-65—202	-11
Daniel Hillier	68-68-67—203	-10
Min Woo Lee	69-65-69—203	-10
Adam Scott	69-66-68—203	-10
Wenyi Ding	71-65-68—204	-9
Lucas Herbert	75-65-65—205	-8
Caleb Surratt	70-66-69—205	-8
Jack Buchanan	70-72-64—206	-7
Jake McLeod	70-69-67—206	-7
Elvis Smylie	65-72-69—206	-7
Abraham Ancer	70-70-67—207	-6
Davis Bryant	71-67-69—207	-6
Greg Chalmers	73-66-68—207	-6
Ryan Fox	65-71-71—207	-6
Ryo Hisatsune	71-70-66—207	-6
Michael Hollick	69-69-69—207	-6
Marc Leishman	70-69-68—207	-6
Wade Ormsby	68-69-70—207	-6
Daniel Rodrigues	69-64-74—207	-6
Ben Henkel	70-71-67—208	-5
Stefano Mazzoli	69-71-68—208	-5
Matthew McCarty	70-69-69—208	-5
Rory McIlroy	72-68-68—208	-5
Bernd Wiesberger	70-68-70—208	-5
Cameron Adam	67-74-68—209	-4
Kiradech Aphibarnrat	71-65-73—209	-4
Rafa Cabrera Bello	69-67-73—209	-4
Aaron Cockerill	74-68-67—209	-4
S. Garcia Rodriguez	72-69-68—209	-4
Richard Green	69-70-70—209	-4
Jack Senior	72-70-67—209	-4
Daniel Young	72-67-70—209	-4
Ugo Coussaud	72-69-69—210	-3
Sean Crocker	70-71-69—210	-3
Sebastian Munoz	69-72-69—210	-3
Tom Vaillant	73-67-70—210	-3
Steve Allan	73-68-70—211	-2
Haydn Barron	72-69-70—211	-2
Austin Bautista	72-70-69—211	-2
Clement Charmasson	67-70-74—211	-2
Jordan Gumberg	73-69-69—211	-2
Tyler Hodge	72-68-71—211	-2
Rocco Repetto Taylor	71-70-70—211	-2
Jason Scrivener	73-67-71—211	-2
Nick Voke	71-70-70—211	-2
Curtis Luck	69-73-70—212	-1
Connor McKinney	73-68-71—212	-1
Geoff Ogilvy	71-71-70—212	-1

ODDS

NBA FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	SUNDAY UNDERDOG
at New York	3½	(232½)	Orlando
Boston	2½	(227½)	at Toronto
at Memphis	1	(234½)	Portland
Denver	10½	(233½)	at Charlotte
at Chicago	off	(off)	Golden State
LA Lakers	3½	(235½)	at Phila.
Oklahoma City	13	(237½)	at Utah

COLLEGE BASKETBALL FAVORITE	LINE	SUNDAY UNDERDOG
at St. Thomas	7	Weber State
at Indiana Statr	10	Southern Indiana
at Kansas	4½	Missouri
at Merrimack	2	Fairfield
Iona	1	at Sacred Heart
Utah State	11	at Charlotte
at Marist	8	Manhattan
at Saint Peter's	5½	Niagara
at Alabama	32½	UTSA
at Siena	16½	Canisius
at Yale	13	UIC
Saint Mary's (CA)	8½	at Davidson
at Quinnipac	15½	Rider
at Texas Tech	4½	LSU
at Saint Louis	23½	C. Michigan
at UCF	9½	Towson
at Pittsburgh	7½	Hofstra
at Mississippi St.	5½	San Francisco
Belmont	2½	at Middle Tenn
at Texas A&M	2½	SMU
at Wright State	7½	Green Bay
Nevada	2½	at Wash. St.
at Nebraska	4½	Creighton
at N. Carolina	11½	Georgetown
TCU	8½	at North Texas
Cornell	1½	at Samford
at Seattle	10½	UTEP

NHL FAVORITE	LINE	SUNDAY UNDERDOG	LINE
Colorado	-150	at Philadelphia	+125
at Florida	-162	N.Y Islanders	+134
at Carolina	-315	San Jose	+250
at Dallas	-205	Pittsburgh	+168
at Montreal	-150	St. Louis	+125
at Washington	-205	Columbus	+168
Vegas	-164	at NY Rangers	+136
at Anaheim	-200	Chicago	+164

NFL WEEK 14 FAVORITE	NOW	O/U	SUNDAY UNDERDOG
Indianapolis	1½	(46½)	at Jacksonville
at Baltimore	5½	(43½)	Pittsburgh
at Buffalo	5½	(52½)	Cincinnati
Washington	1½	(43½)	at Minnesota
Miami	3	(41½)	at NY J

NATIONAL SPORTS REPORT

SHORTS

Summer Olympians begin torch relay

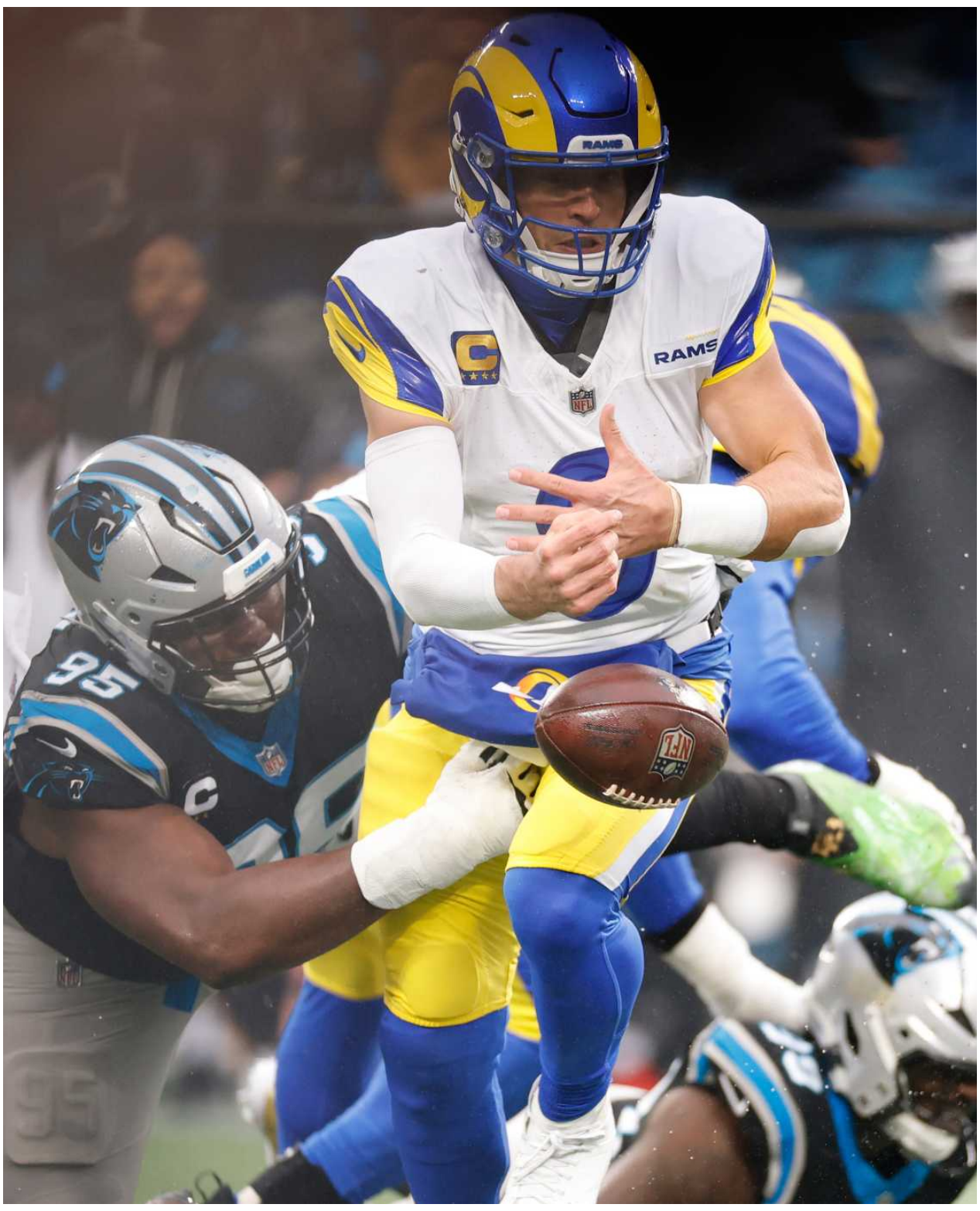
Olympic swimming champion Gregorio Paltrinieri, pictured, and fellow Summer athletes started off the torch relay for the Milan Cortina Winter Games on Saturday — which marked exactly two months before the Feb. 6 opening ceremony. Paltrinieri carried the sleek torch around the track of the statue-lined Stadio dei Marmi at the Foro Italico to begin a trek covering nearly 7,500 miles that will wind its way through all 110 Italian provinces before reaching Milan's San Siro Stadium for the opening ceremony. "It's a pleasure to be part of the Olympic movement movement, even if it's Winter Olympics," Paltrinieri said. In all, there will be 10,001 torch bearers. Giancarlo Peris, the final torch bearer from the 1960 Olympics in Rome, carried out the Olympic flame in a lantern to get the proceedings going. The 84-year-old Peris was 18 when he lit the cauldron at the Stadio Olimpico more than 65 years ago. "I didn't think I would be here today," Peris said with a chuckle. Paltrinieri won gold in the 1,500 meters at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games and has five Olympic medals in all.

'They deserve action and not excuses'

Big 12 Commissioner Brett Yormark, pictured, says legislation currently stalled in Congress is needed to regulate college athletics and put a stop to what he essentially calls uncapped spending for name, image and likeness in football. "Let me be clear about this," Yormark said Saturday before the Big 12 championship game between No. 5 Texas Tech and 11th-ranked BYU at the home of the Dallas Cowboys. "The House of Representatives must do what is right for over 500,000 student-athletes and pass the SCORE Act. We must protect their future, their well-being and their fair treatment. They deserve action and not excuses." An effort backed by the NCAA, the U.S. Olympic organization and the White House faltered in Congress this past week, with opponents raising concerns over the wide-reaching power it gives the governing body of college sports and its most powerful programs. The NCAA and Division I conferences portray the legislation as codifying the rules created by the lawsuit settlement that allows college players to be paid, providing clarity that supporters say is long-needed.

WC final will be at MetLife Stadium

The World Cup final will kick off at 3 p.m. EDT next July 19 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. FIFA announced the start times for the tournament's 104 matches on Saturday, a day after the draw for the expanded 48-nation tournament. The kickoff time allows for prime-time viewing in Europe, where it will be 9 p.m., and Britain, where it will be 8 p.m. The average 3 p.m. temperature over the past 30 years in East Rutherford on July 19 is 83 degrees (28 Celsius) with a RealFeel index of 89 (32), according to AccuWeather. Nine of the 10 World Cup finals from 1978 through 2014 started in the 2-3:30 p.m. EDT range, the exception 2002 in Japan, which began at 7 a.m. EDT. The 2018 final started at 11 a.m. EDT and the 2022 championship of a tournament shifted to winter in Qatar at 10 a.m. EST. The 1994 final at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, kicked off at 12:30 p.m. local time (3:30 p.m. EDT). The World Cup opener at Mexico City on June 11 between El Tri and South Africa will start at 1 p.m. local (3 p.m. EDT). Semifinals will start at 2 p.m. (3 p.m. EDT) on July 14 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, and 3 p.m. the following day at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, both of which have retractable roofs. *—Associated Press*



Panthers defensive end Derrick Brown forces a fumble by Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford on Nov. 30 in Charlotte, N.C. **RUSTY JONES/AP**

NFL

Get on the ball

Stafford has already moved past his 3-turnover game

By Greg Beacham
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Matthew Stafford's 192 career interceptions are the most among active quarterbacks. He has also fumbled 91 times in his 17-year NFL career. So his three crucial turnovers in the Rams' 31-28 loss at Carolina aren't going to send Stafford into a funk or a crisis of competence.

"I know that whether we win or we lose, I move on pretty darn quickly," Stafford said Wednesday. "I just know that I have another challenge in front of me."

The eighth-leading passer in NFL history has the experience and the maturity to know that a quarterback can't allow mistakes or bad luck to beat him twice — particularly not during a season in which he has played his way into strong contention for his first league MVP award.

"I've played in a lot of games now, so (moving on) just feels like it comes easy to me," Stafford said. "It doesn't mean that I don't care about each and every single one of them, and do everything I can to try and help us win each and every one of them. But I do know that unless it's the last game of the year, there's another one coming, and you better be ready for it."

Stafford knows that his two interceptions — doubling his season total — and a late fumble were the biggest reasons why the Rams lost to the Panthers and fell out of the No. 1 spot in the NFC standings. There's still nothing he'll do much differently when he leads the Rams (9-3) to Arizona on Sunday.

"I've got a bunch of plays I've got to learn," he said. "I've got to make sure everybody's in the right spots at the right places. I do move on pretty quick, so I feel good about that, and I think the guys in our locker room do as well."

Stafford has had a reputation as an aggressive gunslinger for most of his career. He threw at least 10 interceptions in each of his first nine full seasons with the Lions, and he even led the NFL with 17 interceptions during his first season with the Rams.

That season that ended with a Super Bowl victory — albeit one in which he also threw two interceptions to the Bengals before hitting Cooper Kupp for the winning touchdown on a masterful late drive.

Stafford is still taking risks at 37 years old. He throws into tight windows with more frequency than most quarterbacks, usually trusting Davante Adams or Puka Nacua to come up with the ball in difficult spots. With increasing frequency, he's also throwing the no-look passes for which he has become famous ever since he did it on the winning drive in the Super Bowl.

Before the trip to rain-soaked Charlotte, Stafford had done an exceptional job of taking care of the ball this season, particularly during the Rams' six-game winning streak to the top of the conference. He set an NFL record by throwing 28 straight touchdown passes without an interception while playing eight straight pick-free games, and he had lost only two fumbles in the Rams' first 11 games. Coach Sean McVay isn't discounting his star quarterback's mistakes at Carolina, but he also doesn't think Stafford needs much advice on how to play quarterback.

"The first one, sometimes those are unfortunate occupational hazards of a tipped ball right there and there's not a lot that you can do," McVay said. "But then the next two, absolutely you talk about, 'What are the things that we could do to prevent turning the football over, whether it's the interception or the fumble?'"

Stafford's first interception since Week 3 was painful, because it came on a tipped pass by the Panthers' Derrick Brown into the arms of former Rams safety Nick Scott in the end zone.

That turnover cost the Rams at least three points — and on their next drive, Mike Jackson jumped a route and returned Stafford's second interception for a 48-yard touchdown.

Stafford's fumble came on the Rams' last offensive snap, forced by Brown while Stafford tried to escape a collapsing pocket. Again, the Rams lost at least three points in what turned out to be a three-point loss.

"I still thought we gave ourselves a chance at the end of the game to win it," Stafford said. "It was a mistake by myself to let that ball come out of my hands and not give us a chance to at least extend the game or going into overtime."

NFL PREDICTIONS

Week 14

By Rob Maaddi | Associated Press

Last week: *Straight up: 10-6. Against spread: 7-9.*
Overall: *Straight up: 140-53-1. Against spread: 96-92-6.*

CHICAGO (9-3) AT GREEN BAY (8-3-1)
Line: Packers minus 6 ½
Bears have won nine of 10, including an impressive victory at Philly last week. Caleb Williams has to play better for Chicago to be a real threat. If Jordan Love and Micah Parsons keep playing the way they did at Detroit, the Packers might be the team to beat in the NFC.
GAME OF THE WEEK | PACKERS, 27-18

PHILADELPHIA (8-4) AT LOS ANGELES CHARGERS (8-4)
Line: Eagles minus 2 ½
A two-game losing streak has the reigning Super Bowl champs reeling. Justin Herbert had surgery on his left wrist on Monday and his status is unknown, though it would be a surprise if he doesn't play. **BEST BET | EAGLES, 24-18**

INDIANAPOLIS (8-4) AT JACKSONVILLE (8-4)
Line: Colts minus 1 ½
The Colts haven't won in Jacksonville since 2014. Daniel Jones, Jonathan Taylor and the rest of a high-scoring offense have been sluggish during a stretch where Indianapolis has lost three of four.
UPSET SPECIAL | JAGUARS, 22-20

MIAMI (5-7) AT NEW YORK JETS (3-9)
Line: Dolphins minus 2 ½
The Dolphins have won three in a row and Tua Tagovailoa is 6-0 against the Jets. De'Von Achane could have a big day running against New York, which is tied for 25th against the run. **DOLPHINS, 23-20**

PITTSBURGH (6-6) AT BALTIMORE (6-6)
Line: Ravens minus 5 ½
The Steelers are 2-5 since a 4-1 start, Aaron Rodgers isn't getting much help and fans are calling for coach Mike Tomlin to be fired. Lamar Jackson still looks slowed by injury but the Ravens have won the last two meetings by a combined 31 points. **RAVENS, 23-19**

SEATTLE (9-3) AT ATLANTA (4-8)
Line: Seahawks minus 7
Sam Darnold, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and the offense struggled last week but the Seahawks still won 26-0. They've got a dominant defense and an opportunity to earn the No. 1 seed if they win out. **SEAHAWKS, 24-16**

CINCINNATI (4-8) AT BUFFALO (8-4)
Line: Bills minus 5 ½
Joe Burrow returned after missing two months and led the Bengals to a road win at Baltimore. He's 2-0 head-to-head against Josh Allen and the Bills.
BILLS, 24-23

TENNESSEE (1-11) AT CLEVELAND (3-9)
Line: Browns minus 4
Cam Ward's rookie season has been dismal in Tennessee. The Titans have lost seven games by double digits. Shedeur Sanders has shown some of his promise while splitting his first two starts. **BROWNS, 24-23**

WASHINGTON (3-9) AT MINNESOTA (4-8)
Line: Vikings minus 1 ½
J.J. McCarthy is expected to return from a concussion for the Vikings. **VIKINGS, 19-16**

NEW ORLEANS (2-10) AT TAMPA BAY (7-5)
Line: Buccaneers minus 8 ½
Tyler Shough nearly rallied the Saints from a 16-0 deficit against Miami. Cameron Jordan leads a pass rush that could give Baker Mayfield some trouble.
BUCCANEERS, 23-20

DENVER (10-2) AT LAS VEGAS (2-10)
Line: Broncos minus 7 ½
Denver has won nine in a row, overcoming a deficit at some point in each game. Las Vegas has been outscored by nearly 11 points per game. **BRONCOS, 27-13**

LOS ANGELES RAMS (9-3) AT ARIZONA (3-9)
Line: Rams minus 8
Matthew Stafford is coming off a rare three-turnover game and the Rams look to rebound from a poor defensive effort. Jacoby Brissett is 1-6 as a starter for the Cardinals. **RAMS, 31-16**

HOUSTON (7-5) AT KANSAS CITY (6-6)
Line: Chiefs minus 3 ½
Texans have rebounded from an 0-3 start to get right back in the race for the AFC South. Chiefs have run out of margin for error. Their streak of nine straight division titles is ending and they have to go on a run to make it to the AFC title game for the eighth straight season. **CHIEFS, 22-20**

Chicago Tribune
A+E

Christopher Borrelli's top 10 books of 2025. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS**

BEST OF 2025 BOOKS

GOOD READS

This year's top 10 books tackle censorship, crime and compassion

Christopher Borrelli

There are 49 books in front of me, stacked like colorful bricks in a wall. These are the 49 books I didn't include in the Chicago Tribune's 10 Best Books of 2025. If you're curious about the recipe for this list, here's how I do it: I read all year long, and when I finish a book and loved it — a comic book, a mystery, a history, essay collection, novel — I set it aside. As months roll on, the stack climbs, teeters. It lives inside a closet. Occasionally, I hear a collapse when the stack gets too tall.

By July, the rumbling begins.

Then, sometime in November, when I can no longer read another thing and the deadline for this list approaches, I drag it all out of the closet and intuitively separate out the books I haven't been able to shake. When I have 10, I have a list. I wish it were more thoughtful. I do shift books in and out of the top 10 pile until I feel certain: My favorites. But basically, that's the process.

Then, afterwards, I feel terrible.

The first week of January I recall thinking, of course Adam Ross's **"Playworld,"** a disturbing novel about a child actor and a much older woman, will make the top 10 in December. *Nope.*

Turn to Borrelli, *Page 7*

This season's best gift books

The best books to gift include "Teenagers in Their Bedrooms," a set of revealing, powerful portraits.

By Christopher Borrelli
Chicago Tribune

My favorite part of the holidays is giving someone a book. I'm that person who gives everyone on my list a wrapped book then I joke it's a box of socks. My least favorite part of the holidays, however, is realizing months later they still have not opened that book.

The secret to a happy pairing?

Being honest about who that person is, not who you want them to be. With this in mind, what follows are the best gift books of the season, paired to some very specific people.

FOR THE CONSTANT READER

It's hard to beat a Folio Society edition of a favorite book. They are to literature what the Criterion Collection is to movies, only much older, offering contemporary classics and established landmarks in keepsake editions ripe for posterity. Their latest includes **"The Binti Trilogy,"** the great sci-fi epic from Flossmoor-native Nnedi Okorafor, featuring illustrations by David Palumbo that

Turn to Gift books, *Page 4*

BEST OF 2025

If it's December, it must be the season to look back and sum up the year. Beginning with this Sunday's edition of A+E, our critics and columnists remember the highs and lows of 2025, including our picks for the 10 best books of the year. As well as the best books to give as gifts.

Next Sunday: The best of Chicago theater and dance and all kinds of music.
In the weeks ahead, we select our Chicagoans of the Year in the arts and remember those we lost in 2025.

Holiday gifts from Chicago museums celebrate city culture

By Amy Bizzarri
For the Chicago Tribune

For Chicagoans who dread the frenzy of holiday shopping, there's a calmer alternative. Instead of heading to mall, you can head to a museum.

The city's cultural institutions offer festive shopping options that you may find inspiring, and you likely won't find in big-box aisles. Museum gift shops brim with festive cards, clever stocking stuffers and unique items that carry real stories.

Plus, it's a chance to support the organizations that make Chicago a cultural hub.

Admission is not required to visit these museum shops, but you may also enjoy browsing the galleries for things that aren't for sale.

ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

The AIC's two museum shops are filled with art-inspired gifts that incorporate masterpieces into everyday life.

For kids, show a little love for sweet home Chicago with a Chicago flag plush ($28) or the colorful "Chicago ABCs" board book ($14.99). The plush green lions ($25),

Turn to Museums, *Page 2*

Bronze lion paperweight ($75) at the Art Institute of Chicago gift shop.
E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

West Aurora High School students browse the Tienda Tzintzuntzan ("place of the hummingbirds") gift shop in the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago's Lower West Side neighborhood which sells various items made by Mexican artisans and artists as well as books jewelry and more. **DOMINIC DI PALERMO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Museums

from Page 1

modeled after the museum's Michigan Avenue guardians, can even be adorned with removable holiday wreaths.

For fashion and accessories, the Tiffany Hartwell Memorial Window silk scarf ($45) and Tiffany stained-glass earrings ($40) transform Art Institute icons into wearable works.

Desk décor lovers can protect their workspace with a bronze lion paperweight ($75).

Art fans can keep their feet cozy with playful socks featuring masterpieces such as Edward Hopper "Nighthawks" ($16), or hold their eyeglasses safe with the Claude Monet "Water Lilies" eyeglass case and cloth ($24).

Gift shops are located at the Michigan Avenue entrance and the Modern Wing entrance.

111 S. Michigan Ave.; shop.artic.edu

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

For the basketball fan who also loves art, the MCA X Bulls crew sweatshirt ($110) could be a slam dunk. Designed by Chicago artist Cody Hudson, this piece unites two city brands — the Bulls and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Pop art lovers may gravitate toward the Haring Radiant Baby & Barking Dog hoodie ($120). Inspired by Keith Haring's original Pop Shop designs, this heavyweight cotton blend hoodie features his playful artwork on both front and back, and has a kangaroo pouch.

For a unique accessory, try the Isabelle Gougenheim X MCA Good Vibes silk scarf ($240).

Design enthusiasts might appreciate the Lop lamp ($195), created by French designer Thomas Vincent. Its layered acrylic planes and hovering sphere create an illusion of motion when lit.

And for the collector who values both art and activism, Yoko Ono's limited-edition "Add Color Where the World Needs Peace" print ($515) offers a chance to own a numbered work authenticated by the artist herself.

220 E. Chicago Ave.; mcachicagostore.org

SHEDD AQUARIUM

Comfort seekers can cozy up this winter with beluga whale pajama pants ($45) or sea otter plush slippers ($37). Seal the deal with a cuddly plush moray eel ($23).

Great Lakes coasters ($10) celebrate regional ecosystems with artwork by Chicago's own Bagman Studios.

And if you have a marine creature lover in your life, a Shedd Aquarium animal encounter offers a chance to go behind the scenes and get up close with animals such as penguins, belugas, sea lions and sea otters. Experiences start at $99.95 per person, depending on the animal.

1200 S. DuSable Lake Shore Drive; sheddaquarium.org

GLESSNER HOUSE

When you visit the Glessner House Museum in winter, the venue in the Near South Side's Prairie District is dressed up in its Gilded Age holiday best. The in-museum shop has gifts that celebrate Chicago's architectural heritage and design traditions.

Choose from coaster sets featuring tiles from the house's fireplaces ($14.50) or inspired by carved wood furniture details ($14.50), both adding a touch of history to your coffee table.

A set of William Morris notecards ($18.95) emblazoned with eight of the designer's iconic patterns used throughout the house are new for 2025.

Bookworms and Chicago history buffs may appreciate the book "Clarke House: Chicago's Oldest Building" ($14.95), chronicling Chicago's oldest surviving home as it approaches its 190th anniversary in 2026. And for architecture enthusiasts, the museum's own publication "Louis Sullivan: An American Architect" ($39.95) offers fresh insight into the legendary designer's work and legacy.

1800 S. Prairie Ave.; glessnerhouse.org

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MEXICAN ART

At Tienda Tzintzuntzan, or "place of the hummingbird", the National Museum of Mexican Art's gift shop retail manager, Raquel Juarez, curates treasures directly from artisans across Mexico.

Highlights include a paper-mâché doll by Brittani Walker Morales of Guanajuato ($200) and a Capulineado vase from Michoacán ($100), decorated with intricate dotted patterns.

From Chiapas, handwoven Huichol dresses showcase traditional craftsmanship. The green dress ($65) and white huipil dress ($140) are both wearable works of art.

Everyday items get a cultural twist with a ceramic mug from The Found ($18.50) and leather bolsas, or bags, from Guerrero ($72).

Collectors may be drawn to the wooden alebrijes from Oaxaca — fantastical creatures carved and painted in vibrant colors, including owls ($420-$450), a coyote ($320) and a jaguar ($400).

1852 W. 19th St.; nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org

GRIFFIN MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Spark curiosity and wonder with science-themed gifts, including a detailed U-505 Submarine build-it-yourself model ($123), celebrating one of the museum's most iconic exhibits, a type IXC submarine launched by the German Kriegsmarine on May 24, 1941.

Night Sky Playing Cards ($5.95) teach constellations while you play, and the Pocketscope ($35) is made for magnifying on the go.

The desktop Foucault Pendulum ($45) is a reminder that the Earth is indeed still spinning.

5700 S. Lake Shore Drive; griffinmsi.org

CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE CENTER DESIGN STORE

Design meets "The Bear" with the Franklin Barstool ($675), a custom piece from Navillus Woodworks'

Turn to Museums, *Page 3*

Plush moray eels ($23 each) decorate a Christmas tree at the Shedd Aquarium gift shop. **CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Edward Hopper "Nighthawks" socks ($16) at the Art Institute of Chicago Museum. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

A paper mâché doll by Brittani Walker Morales of Guanajuato, Mexico ($200) at the National Museum of Mexican Art gift shop. **DOMINIC DI PALERMO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

A Capulineado vase ($100) at the National Museum of Mexican Art shop. **DOMINIC DI PALERMO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Tiffany stained-glass earrings ($40) at the Art Institute of Chicago Museum. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Museums

from Page 2

Franklin Dining series, the same woodworkers that outfit the fictional Chicago restaurant aspiring for a Michelin star in the hit television series.

Chicago skyscraper playing cards ($24.95) showcase 56 buildings that illustrate our city's architectural evolution from the 19th century to today.

When you buy the multicolored Kinetics Necklace ($168.95), with handmade paper designs by Takara Beatheagudell, you'll also help support area women reentering the workforce.

Art created by locals is another option. The "JazOnVinyl" print ($275) by artist Jaz captures Chicago, movies, music and pop culture in a nostalgic 24-inch-by-36-inch illustration. And Nick Ulivieri's "Surge" print ($400) of the same size, available exclusively at the CAC Design Store, offers a glimpse of the city through his lens.

111 E. Wacker Drive; architecture.org

AMERICAN WRITERS MUSEUM

For the bookworm in your life, the gift shop at the American Writers Museum offers literary-inspired ideas.

Carry your passion for writing everywhere with a typewriter bag ($45), a nod to the bygone tool of authors past.

The "A book a day keeps reality away" mini cross stitch kit ($18.95) could serve as a stocking stuffer for crafty readers.

And for those who love quirky accessories, the Tiniest Book Club Earrings ($22.95) featuring the covers of iconic American novels are a way to wear your love of literature.

180 N. Michigan Ave.; americanwritersmuseum.org

Amy Bizzarri is a freelance writer.

Octopus chandelier ornaments ($40) at the Shedd Aquarium. The ornaments are a tribute to the Tiffany pendants that hang in the rotunda at the Shedd. **CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

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Artists, prices and programs subject to change. Listed ticket price includes required fees.

"Air Jordan," by Assouline Publishing, "Meaning Matter Memory: Selections from the Studio Museum in Harlem Collection," "Martha Graham Dance Company 100 Years," by Ken Browar and Deborah Ory, "The Complete Peanuts 1969-1970" and "The Complete Peanuts 1997-1998," by Charles M. Schulz. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS**

Gift books

from Page 1

cement the series in a long history of genre fiction. Even nicer: The elegant linocuts by British artist Becca Thorne that spot a new edition of Maggie O'Farrell's modern classic **"Hamnet."** For children: A vibrant reissue of **"Pippi Longstocking,"** quirkily manic as its heroine.

FOR CHICAGOANS NOT FROM CHICAGO

"Clout City: The Rise and Fall of the Chicago Political Machine," by Columbia College's Dominic A. Pacyga, is an accessible one-stop history that returns the familiar story of how Chicago works to its cultural, street-level roots, from the Great Fire to the "rusted-out remnant" of Mike Madigan. If that sounds too familiar, might I suggest a newer epic about doing the same thing and expecting a different result: Danish writer Solvej Balle's **"On the Calculation of Volume,"** a cult smash with "Groundhog Day" vibes, the story of a woman trapped in Nov. 18 who meets others lost in the same time. (Volume III just came out and it's addicting.)

FOR THE MUSEUM FIEND WHO CAN'T MAKE IT TO EVERYTHING

The catalog for Wrightwood 659's "The First Homosexuals: The Birth of a New Identity 1869-1939" is as ambitious and absorbing as the exhibition, a vast internationally-minded study of how fine art portrayed homosexuality for centuries; what packed the Lincoln Park gallery earlier this year is now tucked alongside deeper dives into Russia, Japan, Brazil. **"Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind"** is the catalog you needed after the moving new exhibit at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, a way to slow down and read all of those instructions on many of Ono's works, prompts for creating your own art. One catalog for an exhibition that never made it to Chicago: **"3-D Doings: The Imagist Object in Chicago Art 1964-1980,"** organized by Skidmore College, is great fun, a roundup of the objects, the pop irons, stools, mannequins, tiny diners and more, constructed by the fabled Hairy Who art collective and Barbara Rossi, Ed Paschke, etc.

FOR THE RESTLESSLY CREATIVE

Elizabeth McCracken's **"A Long Game: Notes on Writing Fiction"** boils 35 years of teaching creative writing into 280 practical points, from the siren's song of punctuation to the danger in striving for perfection. It'd make a nice companion to **"Nature Notes of an Edwardian Lady,"** an elegant illustrated diary from 1905 by the English artist Edith Holden, pairing her watercolors with daily thoughts about the moors, the grass, the birds... If you fear hand's-on life lessons are being lost to iPads, try **"Little Woodchucks: Offerman Woodshop's Guide to Tools and Tomfoolery,"** which Nick Offerman wrote as a step-by-step manual for kids to make toys and little libraries, but *hmmm*, I know an adult who might benefit even more...

FOR YOUR DEBBY DOWNER

I can barely write this, I'm so hypnotized by "The Penguin Book of Cults," a fascinating batch of news accounts, papers, Roman tales, forming a first-person history of Branch Davidians, Jonestown, Kansas City "vampires," even a sect in the late 19th century formed around a Rockford man who said he was Jesus Christ. Sound too peppy? **"Wish We Weren't Here: Postcards From the Apocalypse"** collects Peter Kuper's celebrated four-panel editorial comics for the Washington Post and others, explaining our existential threats — sea-level rise, plastic waste — in a blink.

FOR THE INDOMITABLE SWIFTIE

"Taylor Swift: All The Songs: The Story Behind Every Track" is not authorized,

"Lee Friedlander: Christmas," by Lee Friedlander, "Norman Rockwell's Christmas," by Norman Rockwell, "The Uptown: Chicago's Endangered Movie Palace," by Robert Loerzel and James A. Pierce and "Chicago's Holiday Train," by Daniel Moreno.

Toni Morrison Song of Solomon
Toni Morrison Beloved
PAUL McCARTNEY Wings
THE STORY OF A BAND ON THE RUN
Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe South Africa, 1977/1978
THE AMERICAN ART BOOK

"Song of Solomon" and "Beloved," by Toni Morrison, "Wings: The Story of a Band on the Run," by Paul McCartney, "South Africa, 1977/1978," by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe and "The American Art Book," by Phaidon Press.

"The Mistress in Black: A Ghost Story for Christmas," by Rosemary Timperley, from left, "The Nature Notes of an Edwardian Lady," by Edith Holden, The Best American Short Stories 2025," edited by Celeste Ng, "The Best American Essays 2025," edited by Jia Tolentino, "Doctor Strange: A Decade of Dark Magic," by Stuart Moore, "Daredevil: Born Again," by Chris Ryall and "Reel Politik," by Nathan Gelgud.

and landed too late to include "Life of a Showgirl," but here's nearly 500 nicely illustrated pages on every track, all the boyfriend clapbacks, all the backstories, all the hidden messages. After that, if you can no longer see the Swiftie forest from the Swiftie trees, Gus Morais' **"Taylor Swift: Unofficial Search & Find Biographies"** will finish off your eyesight: Think "Where's Waldo" with Lollapalooza-dense scenes inspired by Taylor, harboring, somewhere, tiny cartoon Taylors.

FOR THE OWNER OF A NEW COFFEE TABLE WHO WANTS TO SEEM INTERESTING

The key to a good coffee table book is very large, offbeat images of a deceptively obvious subject. Take the sculpture of "Haas Brothers: Uncanny Valley," the exhibition catalog for the Texas-born millennials' Cranbrook Art Museum show outside Detroit. You think furniture, and then no, wait — brains, corral, Muppets... **"Wild Ocean: A Journey to the Earth's Last Wild Coasts"** is a doorstop with actual coral, then comes the twist: cattle on a beach, a volcano of chub off Ecuador. A lack of explanation here only enhances the mystery. **"Martha Graham Dance Company: 100 Years"** is a large portrait of poise, yet, really, it's a study of great costuming, spotlighting 25 seminal productions. **"Italy: In the Footsteps of the Great Artists"** comes across like a travelogue but zeroes in cleverly on the art of altars, palazzos and villas, straying from museums to tell the stories of many lesser-known great works tucked away into the everyday country.

FOR BLOCKHEADS

Is there a person alive who doesn't like "Peanuts"? From 2004 to 2016, Fantagraphics republished all 17,000 Charles Schulz newspaper strips in 26 volumes, with introductions by Matt Groening, John Waters, Barack Obama... This holiday **all 26 are being reissued** — including **"The Complete Peanuts 1969-1970" and "The Complete Peanuts 1997-1998"** — to mark the 75th anniversary of "Peanuts," and I can't think of a nicer tribute to tangible media. For the newbie: **"The Essential Peanuts"** is a best-of wrapped around an often touching history, with appreciations, dives into the TV specials and old paperbacks, plus a set of stickers and postcards and a Snoopy patch.

FOR THE ARMCHAIR CHICAGO ARCHITECT

Robert Loerzel, online man about town, terrific historian, has gathered, with James A. Pierce, "The Uptown: Chicago's Endangered Movie Palace," as thoughtful a revival as that seemingly-stalled Northside marvel itself may ever receive. (Finger's crossed.) **"Chicago's Fine Arts Building: Music, Magic and Murder,"** by Keir Graff, one of the building's resident writers, is a mountain of archival insight, coupled with a sweet set of portraits of contemporary tenants. Pointedly more prosaic: **"Chicago Homes: A Portrait of the City's Everyday Architecture,"** by Carla Bruni and Phil Thompson, is a richly illustrated taxonomy, and a readable explainer, of every brick flat, apartment courtyard and pre-fab dwelling in Cook County.

FOR THE COUSIN WHO'D RATHER BE HOOPING IN THE DRIVEWAY

"Air Jordan," by art book publisher Assouline, starts with a sneaker fetish, then covers so much cultural ground — from Michael Jordan-branded french fry packets to a foldout of seemingly every rap lyric namecheck of Air Jordans — the shoe plays like a pebble in an ongoing ripple. A must for Bulls obsessives. Stephen Curry's **"Shot Ready,"** certainly pretty, is closer to self-help than revelatory. Far more insightful is **"Masters of the Game,"** a collaboration between former Tribune sports writer Sam Smith and former Bulls coach Phil Jackson, who essentially *chat* about NBA legends — sports history as bull session.

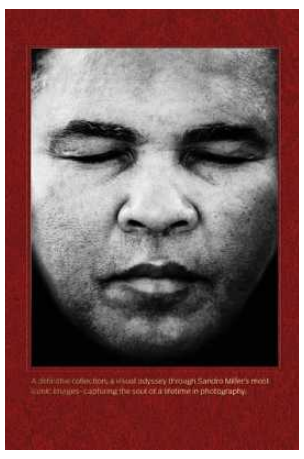
FOR A FRESH LOOK AT CLASSIC AMERICAN ARTISTS

"South Africa, 1977/1978," reminiscent of Gordon Parks and Robert Frank, collects images of everyday segregation and resistance, mundane and epic. The photographer is Chatham native Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, who spent decades obscured by her better-known husband, Arthur Ashe. If you're looking for a compact, lively art education in a single book, **"Meaning Matter Memory: Selections from the Studio Museum in Harlem"** gathers 250 artists (including Chicagoans Dawoud Bey and Theaster Gates) in the collection of this venerable Manhattan museum, which just relocated after 57 years. Much broader: **"The American Art Book"** updates a classic Phaidon best-of survey, pulling together 500 representative pieces, from 17th-century portraiture to conceptual

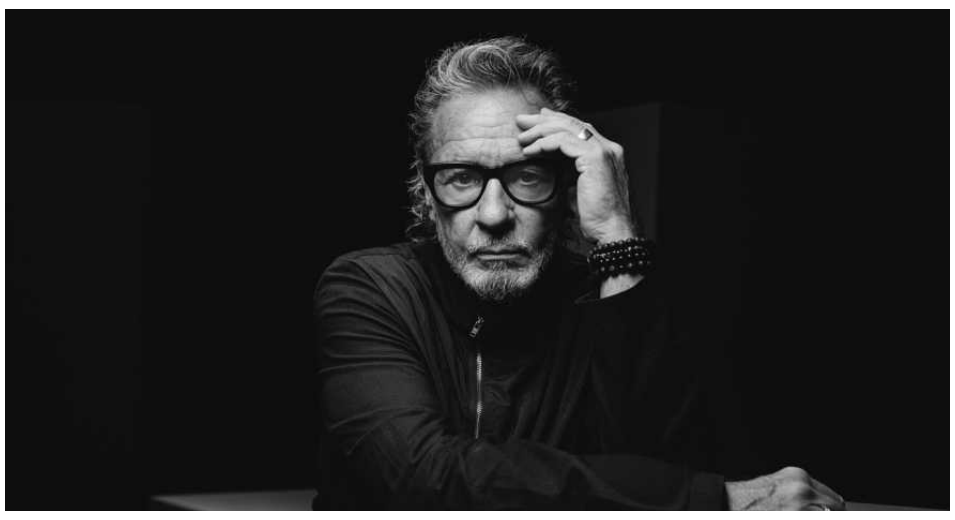
Turn to Gift books, *Page 5*

Photographer Sandro Miller's new book celebrates 50 years of faces

Rick Kogan



'ON EARTH AS IT IS NOT IN HEAVEN'
By Sandro Miller
Skira Press, 276 pages



Chicago-based photographer Sandro Miller has been traveling the globe for more than 50 years, cameras and curiosity in tow. **DIANA KARTASHEVA**

Moose was worried.

Bill "Moose" Skowron was one of the greatest baseball players of his time. A Chicago native and 16-inch softball legend, he played for years on the New York Yankees (28 home runs in 1961) and was best pals with Mickey Mantle. He came to the White Sox for a while to play and had been retired and working in community relations for that team when I met him in 2000.

That year, he and I were on our way to photographer Sandro Miller's studio on the Near West Side. Moose was uneasy because, almost inconceivably, he had never sat for a formal portrait before preparing to do so for a story I was writing.

"What kind of person takes the picture?" Moose asked. "Am I dressed OK?"

He told me that his wife, Virginia, had urged him to wear a conservative outfit of white shirt, dark tie, sport coat and slacks. The meeting and the photo session started awkwardly, but eventually Miller won Moose over, and the ballplayer allowed the photographer's assistants to apply makeup, get him to change into a black turtleneck sweater and to pose in various ways (including biting down on a baseball) that made for many striking images.

"Good guy, Sandro," said Moose on the way back to his suburban home.

"Hope he's good at taking pictures."

This memory came rushing back when I opened a remarkable new book, "On Earth as It Is Not in Heaven" (Skira Press), 276 pages filled with 229 photos and some words from a small gathering of the voices of photography experts David Campany, Phillip Prodger, Anne Morin and Alan Cohen, former Chicago journalist and prize winning poet Patricia Smith and some guy named John Malkovich.

Sandro Miller's photos explode across the pages, like some visual fireworks display, holding the eyes and intriguing the mind and, often, grabbing the heart.

The book answers Skowron's old question with a resounding, profound "Yes."

Yes, Sandro Miller is good at taking pictures, extraordinarily good.

He has taken thousands of them over the last half century, ever since growing up in Elgin, remembering being a 5-year-old, the eldest to three children, and learning that his father had been killed in an auto accident. He writes of that and of his first experience with cameras and the amazing journey that followed, a trip that he still sees as his salvation. He writes that the book "is my tribute to humankind from birth to death. These portraits were not made for me, and they were not made for my sitter, the portraits were created for you, the viewer."

He has shot for hundreds of national advertising campaigns for clients such as American Express, BMW, Pepsi, Nikon, Microsoft, Nike and the U.S. Army. He has had solo shows here and in Germany and Italy, and his editorial work has been featured in The New Yorker, GQ, Esquire, Time, Forbes, ESPN Magazine and the Tribune.

"On Earth as It Is Not in Heaven" is his 16th book. Previously, he traveled to Cuba and produced "Imagine Cuba, 1999-2007," published in 2009. There were many Cuban boxers in the book, some famous in pugilistic circles. There are also wrestlers, volleyball players, and swimmers. But Miller was obviously also grabbed by the less acclaimed or physically chiseled folks, those he calls "the people of Cuba on the streets (who) filled a void in my soul, a void that felt empty with loss" after his father's death.

He brings dignity and humanity to so-called ordinary people in the book, as he does often and powerfully.

A very different book came in 2012. It was "Sandro: Raw: Steppenwolf," a massive, 234-page book with many photos and a few words that weighed about 15 pounds. As I wrote then, "If you think you know the members of the Steppenwolf ensemble from their stage, TV and film work ... seeing them through Miller's lens will etch them in your mind in new and vibrant ways."

It came about as another form of salvation when Miller was diagnosed with stage 4 throat and neck cancer. He told me, "I knew I was in for an arduous eight-month journey. I knew that the treatments would make it impossible for me to work with clients. I knew that I needed something to help me heal."

So, he dove into his files and found thousands of photos he had taken for Steppenwolf over the previous 14 years, since he was first hired to shoot actors' portraits for use in posters, playbills and advertisements.

"In dusting off the old negatives, I remembered what amazing things took place in the studio after we did what we needed to do," he said. "Over the years, I have gotten to know many of them well, and there is a level of trust we have cultivated."

His most intense photographer-subject relationship has been and remains John Malkovich. The two have collaborated on such books as "Malkovich, Malkovich, Malkovich: Homage to Photographic Masters," "Malkovich Sessions," and "Malkovich: Then Came John." In these, Malkovich is photographed dressed as such famous stars as Bette Davis and Orson Welles, and also recreates famous photos. He's got a few shots in this new book, in which he writes that Miller "is a fantastic colleague and friend, a great storyteller and a wonderfully gifted seeker and finder of truths."

"On Earth as It Is Not in Heaven" is being formally published this week, with a book signing event at his studio for friends and family, including his wife, filmmaker Claudie-Aline Miller and two adult children, Nathan and Natalia.

As far as I know, he will continue taking pictures, and that's good. "Moose" Skowron died in 2012, but it's my understanding that he kept in his living room a framed photo of himself that Miller had sent him after their 2000 photo shoot. And now, having spent time with Miller's work again, I realized how much of my life and career has been spent in the company of photographers. I have known famous ones — Art Shay, Victor Skrebneski, Steve Schapiro, Jack Lane and more. And there have been all the years in the company of the Tribune's Charles Osgood and many other great newspaper photographers.

And yet, I remain blissfully ignorant of their art. Matters such as lighting and composition are foreign to me. But the results so often amaze me, as they do in this new book, that what they do seems like magic.

rkogan@chicagotribune.com

Gift books

from Page 4

performance, into a reminder of how American art only thrives with American diversity.

FOR A MORE PLAYFUL ART BOOK

There's no shortage of coffee-table appreciations of Kerry James Marshall. **"Kerry James Marshall: Rythm Mastr — This is How it Begins"** is the first focused squarely on the Chicago-based artist's 25-year-long sidebar into comics, placing them in the context of his fine art and the history of Black characters in comics. Speaking of lesser-known side gigs: **"Garbage Pail Kids"** compiles all 206 stickers that Art Spiegelman (with a smaller team at Topps) created in the mid-80s, clearly inspired by underground comix. (The book even includes a bonus pack of stickers.) OK, now this is super fun: **"Drawn to MOMA: Comics Inspired by Modern Art,"** created by the New York City institution, asks 25 cartoonists to make an original piece about a visit to MOMA. Chris Ware, being constitutionally unable to do anything easy, contributed a whole poster (which is folded and included at the back).

FOR COMEDY-OBSESSED CHICAGO

"Comedy Nerd: A Lifelong Obsession in Stories and Pictures," Judd Apatow's sweet scrapbook of candids and anecdotes, from "Freaks and Geeks" to "Anchorman" to seemingly every stage appearance and producer credit, is a heap of charm; whoever receives this will curl into it for hours. Same for **"John Candy: A Life in Comedy,"** Paul Myers' just-the-facts biography, with a nice delve into Candy's Second City stint in Chicago. Speak of the devil: Anne Libera, Second City's director of comedy studies, has **"Funnier: A New Theory for the Practice of Comedy,"** a trove of practical advice for anyone thinking about going pro.

Folio Society books with slipcases "Hamnet," by Maggie O'Farrell, left, and "The Binti Trilogy," by Nnedi Okorafor. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

FOR SOMEONE EDGY YET APPROACHABLE

Diane DiMassa's **"Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist,"** a zine staple of the early '90s Chicago, returns not having aged an inch: Here are the first 20 comics, made as "rage therapy," DiMassa says, addressing gender and mental health, yearning for community. Speaking of creatively activist: Ben Passmore's furious graphic novel **"Black Arms to Hold You Up: A History of Black Resistance"** finds the author forced to time travel through moments — the Black Liberation Army, 1900 Louisiana — when Black Americans picked up guns and fought back. Nothing, though, is as surprising as **"The Complete C Comics,"** writer Joe Brainard's brief delve into abstract, free-associative '60s comic books, with parodies of "Nancy" and "Archie" and collaborations with Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery ...

FOR THOSE WITHOUT ENOUGH TIME IN THE DAY

Anything from The Best American series, still going at 110 years old. Six volumes now, including "The Best American Short Stories," "The Best American Food and Travel Writing" and "The Best American Essays." A nice way of catching up over winter, finding new voices, reading a must-read piece you missed. Okorafor edited "The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy," and Susan Orlean assembled "The Best American Science and Nature Writing."

FOR THE SIBLING ITCHING TO SNEAK OUT TO A MOVIE

"Godzilla: The First 75 Years," co-written by Chicago-area *kaiju* know-it-all Ed Godziszewski, is the absolute last word on the ageless monster, a history full of storyboards and interviews and charming backstage production stills. Genuinely fascinating, even if your speed is more... **"Making Mary Poppins,"** Todd James Pierce's concept-to-premiere tell-all, so thorough that now I know songwriters Bob and Dick Sherman, who wrote "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious," also came up with "You're Sixteen," which Ringo Starr later turned into a creepy smash. Too earnest? Cartoonist Nathan Gelgud's **"Reel Politik"** asks a question you never considered: What if there was a casual Sunday-comics-esque strip about insufferable movie snobs? (Yes, that's a recommendation.)

FOR THE RECENTLY RADICALIZED

Turn to the Library of America. Their new edition of "The Origins of Totalitarianism" expands Hannah Arendt's first major book, including excised chapters and annotating a prescient map of why Stalinism and Nazism rose simultaneously. Impossible to set aside: **"Jim Crow: Voices From a Century of Struggle, 1876 to 1976,"** a two-volume collection of speeches, congressional testimony, Chicago Defender reporting, pamphlets by Ida B. Wells — a first-hand account of Reconstruction, Chicago's 1919 "Red Summer," the Boston busing crisis...

FOR DAD ROCKERS OF THE '70S-'80S

Paul McCartney's **"Wings: The Story of a Band on the Run"** offers a welcome breather from Liverpool, a collaboration between McCartney, filmmaker Morgan Neville and presidential speechwriter Ted Widmer, who gathered a sometimes juicy oral retelling of the disorienting, platinum years after the Beatles. **"Iron Maiden: Infinite Dreams"** is light on reading material but heavy on everything else, a huge visual history of the 50-year-old metal institution, from early diaries of its founders to a truly cool gallery of fans' denim vests. **"The Grateful Dead: Photos and Stories from the Formative Years, 1966-1977"** is a coffee-table love-in, a decade of candids by Jim Marshall, music's most Zelig-like of documentarians. He shot the iconic Johnny Cash middle-finger picture, Dylan album covers, and he was there before there were Deadheads — here's 300 pages of proof, culled from 52,000 images.

FOR ORIGINAL STOCKING STUFFERS

Bloomsbury Publishing brings the historical, critical approach to superheroes it did for albums in its "33 ⅓" series, inviting smart writers to the "Marvel Age of Comics." The first three, small and colorful, turn a critical eye on the Avengers in '70s, Doctor Strange in the '60s and, best, Frank Miller's "Daredevil: Born Again." Even tinier: Biblioasis' ongoing **"A Ghost Story For Christmas" series**, an addicting revival of the Victorian-born tradition of reading scary stories at holidays.

FOR THE READER WHO'S READ EVERYTHING

It's hard being disappointed by a smart new edition of what they already love, and who doesn't love "Pride and Prejudice"? **Rizzoli's "British Library Facsimile Edition,"** made for the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth, is a lovely reproduction of the 1813 first edition in three volumes, in an eggshell blue case, with a bundle of Austen's letters. For more contemporary taste: Vintage, to counter censorship challenges to **Toni Morrison**'s works, is reissuing 11 classics, with new covers and introductions. The first includes "Sula" with an essay by Jesmyn Ward and "Beloved" with an appreciation by Honoree Fanonne Jeffers.

FOR A NOSTALGIC CHRISTMAS VIBE

I can't begin to say how happy I am to see a new reissue of "Norman Rockwell's Christmas," which an aunt gave me in the 1970s and I somehow misplaced. It's the 1977 original, same O. Henry stories, same poems, same letters to Santa — without any *updating*. Same goes for Lee Friedlander's **"Christmas,"** 70 years of slightly seedy, kind of ironic, charming black-and-whites of iffy nativities and roadside yuletides. The joyous commercialism that Friedlander finds is unabashedly celebrated in **"The Mattel Archive,"** a decade-by-decade cataloging of forgotten toys and Barbie makeovers. Ideal for anyone who misses the old Sears holiday catalogs. If you need a reminder that not all of the great holiday traditions have been discontinued, **"Chicago's Holiday Train"** by Daniel Moreno is a modest, gentle photo celebration.

FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE TO BUY FOR

Think *rando*. They were a teenager once (or still are). The new reissue of 1995's **"Teenagers in Their Bedrooms,"** shot by Adrienne Salinger after graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, remains a powerfully, disarmingly revealing set of portraits of kids in their domains, their anxieties and obsessions pasted to their walls. **"Stuff: A New York Life of Cultural Chaos"** could almost be a grown-up sequel: Kim Hastreiter, co-founder of the hipster mag PAPER, shows off the hidden charm of a hoarding impulse, grouping decades of sweaters, ceramic peanuts, newspapers, Obama tchotchkes, brand knockoffs. Every few pages, she pauses to tell stories about her famous friends, whom she also collects.

None of that seems promising?

"It's Snowing!: Fashion, Art, Design and Winter Sports," with its irresistible bright blue and pink cover, collects centuries of examples of how winter sports influenced wallpaper and tin toys and ski jackets and ski boots and ceramic figurines and tourism posters and fashion design. Here is the ideal gift book: Nothing about it sounds interesting, but then hours later, they're still flipping.

cborrelli@chicagotribune.com

BIBLIORACLE

Takeaways from a talk with Percival Everett

By John Warner
For the Chicago Tribune

The novelist Percival Everett in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue in Chicago before an event at Exile in Bookville in 2024. **TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

At the recent convention for the National Council of Teachers of English, I had the pleasure of seeing Percival Everett in conversation with incoming NCTE president and Stanford University professor Antero Garcia.

I have long considered Everett — author most recently of the award-winning Huck Finn retelling "James" — a "genius," saying as much in this very newspaper in June 2017, having believed this to be true for several years before that public declaration.

I have always been curious about "genius," working in a field in which such things are identifiable, while being confident I am not one. I thought maybe hearing a conversation with someone whose work I considered genius would give me some insights into the subject.

It is clear from the conversation that Percival Everett would put little stock in the idea of "genius." He was funny and laconic, perhaps a little grumpy — remarking how tired he was of reading publicly from "James" — but also warm and human. I learned he never goes online. He drafts his novels longhand with pencil in an "embarrassing" notebook, the kind of thing associated with a grade-school girl.

Never going online and handwriting manuscripts are off the table for me in terms of how I make my way in the writing profession, so if these are the keys to genius, I'm out of luck.

Listening closely over the 40 minutes or so, I tried to piece together something concrete I could take away, a real-world practice of genius. I think I may have noticed something anyone could put to use, regardless of our pursuits.

The first intriguing nugget came when Garcia asked about the origins of "James," and Everett admitted there was no good story, that the idea came to him in a moment after hitting an errant tennis shot. He wondered if anyone had ever written "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" from the point of view of Jim.

In the same portion of the conversation, Everett downplayed his own work ethic, declaring that he'd never uttered the sentence, "I can't because I have to work," when asked if he wanted to do something like go to the movies. This suggests that a key part of genius is just waiting around for the brilliance to arrive, but it struck me that Everett was allowing life to unfold without the pressure of production. It is a philosophy of anti-optimization.

At the same time, Everett's work requires a kind of immersive attention. He read Huck Finn more than a dozen times (overkill, according to Everett), and spent many hours contemplating the fact that we have no accurate record of what enslaved persons would have spoken like, a notion that became the keystone to the novel's exploration of language as a source of power and also a way to deceive.

His approach appears to use distraction and attention in combination, opening up the receptors to the world. He recalled wondering to a friend why he kept finding himself walking around caves, and the friend replied, "You're working on a novel," which must be referring to his 2020 novel, "Telephone," in which the main character is a geologist.

This capacity for simultaneously detaching from all the surface-level things clamoring for attention, while also being able to focus on small points of interest — language, caves — that grow into interesting storytelling problems to solve seemed like a good way to produce unique, meaningful literature.

In the end, we're talking about a practice of sensitivity to life and experience, a willingness to be present and explore and think to see what it reveals through this deliberation.

Honestly, it seems very worthy of emulation.

John Warner is the author of books including "More Than Words: How to Think About Writing in the Age of AI." You can find him at biblioracle.com.

Book recommendations from the Biblioracle

John Warner tells you what to read based on the last five books you've read.

1. "Summer of Our Discontent" by Thomas Chatterton Williams
2. "The Wide Wide Sea" by Hampton Sides
3. "Between the World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates
4. "Charley's Web" by Joy Fielding
5. "The Women" by Kristin Hannah
— William S., St. Charles
For William, I'm recommending the first in what is going to be a trilogy from Colson Whitehead, **"Harlem Shuffle."**

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1. "Atonement" by Ian McEwan
2. "More Than Words: How to Think About Writing in the Age of AI" by John Warner
3. "Empire Falls" by Richard Russo
4. "Olive, Again" by Elizabeth Strout
5. "The Stranger" by Albert Camus
— Neil T., Chicago
Jennifer Haigh is one of the most reliably satisfying novelists working today. **"Heat and Light"** is the specific pick.

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1. "Isola" by Allegra Goodman
2. "The Correspondent" by Virginia Evans
3. "The Fire Next Time" by James Baldwin
4. "Cursed Daughters" by Oyinkan Braithwaite
5. "Audition" by Katie Kitamura
— Ileana P., Chicago
I think Ileana stands a good chance of being entertained by Hannah Pittard's **"If You Love It, Let It Kill You."**

Get a reading from the Biblioracle

Send a list of the last five books you've read and your hometown to biblioracle@gmail.com

What to watch

SUNDAY

December 7, 2025

All times Central. Start times can vary based on cable/satellite provider. Confirm times on your on-screen guide.

'Single on the 25th'

PANAGIOTIS PANTAZIDIS, HALLMARK MEDIA

College Football Playoff Selection Show

ESPN, 11 a.m. Live

The 12-team field and seeding for the College Football Playoff are announced and analyzed in this live special on ESPN.

I'll Be Seeing You

FETV, 2 p.m. ■ Catch a Classic

Two sad souls, each with a secret — he has PTSD from war action, she's on a brief furlough from prison —meet cute on a train during the Christmas season in a moment that may just bring much needed joy to their lives. This exceedingly popular 1944 drama, with Ginger Rogers, Joseph Cotten and Shirley Temple, tackled some serious subjects with intelligence and sensitivity and remains a popular holiday favorite as two people, both broken in spirit, slowly come to believe in the possibility of second chances.

Tracker

CBS, 7 p.m.

When a grieving mother becomes the prime suspect in her missing daughter's murder, Colter (Justin Hartley) sets out to find the true culprit and prove her innocence in the new episode "Eurydice."

The Simpsons

FOX, 7 p.m.

Kieran Culkin, Kerry Washington, Karen Gillan, Kurtwood Smith and Barry Sonnenfeld provide guest voices in the new episode "Guess Who's Coming to Skinner," in which Principal Skinner (voice of Harry Shearer) discovers that one of his students is a runaway who has been living in the school library.

Christmas at Mistletoe Manor

Great American Family, 7 p.m. ■ Original Film

When Alice, a spirited East Coast cooking show influencer, journeys to a centuries-old English castle to honor a World War II nurse, she finds herself swept into the castle's holiday magic — and the unexpected warmth of its charming proprietor. Stars Madeleine Coghlan and Lior Selve.

Single on the 25th

Hallmark Channel, 7 p.m. ■ Original Film

For Nell Duke (Lyndsy Fonseca, *Nikita*), nothing is worse than being single at Christmastime because everywhere she looks, couples are kissing under the mistletoe. Things change when her family cancels Christmas plans and she crosses paths with her neighbor Cooper (Daniel Lissing, *When Calls the Heart*), a financial analyst who prides himself on being happily unattached.

90 Day Fiancé: Before the 90 Days

TLC, 7 p.m. ■ Season Premiere

This season introduces a new cast of hopeful romantics ready to risk it all for love when eight Americans leave everything behind to travel to international destinations like the Philippines, Belize, Turkey, Morocco, Madagascar, Nigeria and Australia.

Krapopolis

FOX, 8 p.m.

Tyrannis (voice of Richard Ayoade) and his siblings enter a contest in the new episode "Nike (The Goddness)."

Bob's Burgers

FOX, 8:30 p.m.

Gene and Courtney (voices of Eugene Mirman and David Wain) become embroiled in a complex custody battle over an injured lizard in the new episode "Les Lizárdables."

CATCH A CLASSIC

Shirley Temple Icon-a-Thon

MOVIES!, beginning at 11:15 a.m.

Settle in for a marathon of films starring the smallest (and most popular) triple threat in cinema history. **Bright Eyes** (1937) kicks off the day, where Shirley Temple plays a 5-year-old girl named Shirley who lives with her widowed mother Mary (Lois Wilson) in the care of the wealthy Smythe family and wins their hearts after a plane crash. 1937's **Heidi (pictured)** follows, starring Temple as a Swiss orphan who is taken from her mountain-dwelling grandfather (Jean Hersholt) to be a companion to a disabled girl named Klara (Marcia Mae Jones). The adventure/drama film **Wee Willie Winkie** (1937) is next — one of the only films in Temple's repertoire that doesn't feature her signature song-and-dance routines. Finish your afternoon with 1938's Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, based on the 1903 novel, where Temple shines as a young entertainer who is sought after by a radio producer looking for the perfect face and voice — a true parallel of life imitating art.

20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE

'American Sniper'

WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Ocean's Eleven (2001, Comedy-drama) George Clooney, Matt Damon **Paramount, 5:30 p.m.**

A Working Man (2025, Action) Jason Statham, David Harbour **MGM, 6 p.m.**

Dolly Parton's Coat of Many Colors (2015, Docudrama) Alyvia Alyn Lind, Jennifer Nettles **CMT, 6 p.m.**

Home Alone (1990, Family) Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci **Freeform, 6:15 p.m.**

Pitch Perfect (2012, Musical comedy) Anna Kendrick, Skylar Astin **CW, 6:30 p.m.**

American Sniper (2014, War) Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller **SHO, 6:45 p.m.**

Girl in the Attic (2025, Suspense) Sophia Carriere, Keenan Tracey **LMN, 7 p.m.**

Law Abiding Citizen (2009, Suspense) Jamie Foxx, Gerard Butler **VH1, 7 p.m.**

The Christmas Campaign (2025, Romance) Vivica A. Fox, Jackée Harry **Lifetime, 7 p.m.**

The Princess Bride (1987, Children) Cary Elwes, Robin Wright **BBC America, 7:30 p.m.**

The Matrix (1999, Science fiction) Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne **VICE, 8 p.m.**

The Santa Clause (1994, Family) Tim Allen, Judge Reinhold **ABC, 8 p.m.**

You've Got Mail (1998, Romance-comedy) Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan **E!, 9:30 p.m.**

From the editors of TV Weekly and tvinsider.com

PLAN AHEAD With TV Weekly Magazine
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MOVIES 24/7 GRIDS BEST BETS

House wins new hearts in romance publishing

831 Stories catching eye of readers with fresh approach to genre

By Alisha Haridasani Gupta
The New York Times

Claire Mazur, left, and Erica Cerulo, seen Oct. 21, founded 831 Stories and have built a big-tent community while cultivating a certain mystique. **NATALIE KEYSSAR/THE NEW YORK TIMES PHOTOS**

Eliza Dumais was parked near the bar at the New York City restaurant Bridges. She gestured at an ice bucket on the counter that displayed four bottles of wine.

Each one was from a vineyard where Dumais has harvested grapes. Behind her stood a grazing table piled with whole oranges, chilies and artichokes garlanded around plates of cured meats and cheese, and a butter tower.

The meticulously curated event was to celebrate the recent release of Dumais' debut romance novel, "Grape Juice," set in the vineyards of Alsace, France, and drawing, in part, on her journalistic expertise and her relationship with restaurateur Sam Lawrence.

Yet there was no reading. The book in question was subtly placed near the restaurant's entrance and by the sofas. And were you to catch a glimpse of the cover, you'd never know it was a romance novel at all.

Building a big-tent community of fans while cultivating this mystique is part of what has turned 831 Stories, an independent house founded in fall 2024 by Claire Mazur and Erica Cerulo, into a buzzy new player in the publishing world.

Even as the romance genre continues to outpace the rest of the book industry, 831 Stories, with only seven books in the marketplace, has managed to catch the attention of investors as well as readers.

The company does not share sales figures. But 831 Stories has received more than $4 million in funding: a previously undisclosed $1.5 million from investors including sisters Sara and Erin Foster, hosts of "The World's First Podcast" and creators of the Netflix series "Nobody Wants This." And in August, the company received another $3 million led by Female Founders Fund, a venture capital firm.

Romance, Mazur said, is the "only form of mainstream media that centers women's pleasure, joy and desire."

"If we find success as a business by putting romance in the hands of more people," she added, "that's a beautiful thing."

Cerulo and Mazur met as University of Chicago undergraduates in 2002 and have spent much of their careers together as tastemakers. Their first business venture, in 2010, was an online retailer spotlighting independent fashion brands. They also co-write a lifestyle newsletter, "A Thing or Two," which curates lifestyle tchotchkes and cultural favorites, and co-hosted its related podcast for 10 years.

A launch party hosted by 831 Stories for Eliza Dumais' book "Grape Juice," in New York, on Oct. 21.

In 2019, they published "Work Wife," a book about the power of female friendships in entrepreneurship. When the pandemic hit, the two of them, like many others, found respite in romance novels. "There was something about the guaranteed happily ever after that served me as a reader," Cerulo said.

But at the end of each book, the two of them always craved more. "I was a real student of DVD extras growing up," Mazur said, including the director's cut, deleted scenes and bloopers.

Publishers don't usually offer such ways to extend the story, leaving readers with what Mazur called "a book hangover," only partially cured via online discussion groups and fan fiction. 831 Stories wants to build in that kind of obsessiveness from the start.

"We really want romance readers to want to collect all the books, to want to have an understanding of the entire set of characters, to understand the Easter egg in Book No. 8 that references Book No. 2," Cerulo said.

To fuel the fandom, the company publishes epilogues and fan fiction on its website and runs a Discord channel where readers can discuss the romance universe. They host book swaps around the country so readers can share their favorite titles, even if they aren't published by 831 Stories.

Its pocket-size books (novellas, really) are designed by C47, a creative studio that has done branding projects for the movie studio A24 and luxury fashion labels.

To stand out in a kaleidoscopic sea of romance novels, 831 Stories covers feature no illustrations or images, just blocks of color, the title and author's name in an unflowery sans serif font, an embossed gold Cupid logo and a short promotional blurb, creating the uniform aesthetic of a collectible series.

In spring, 831 Stories' founders plan to roll out a membership program that would give readers early access to new titles and to intimate author events, like a recent karaoke party where readers belted out heartbreak songs with Erika Veurink, the author of "Exit Lane," in which karaoke plays a swoony role.

While Cerulo and Mazur had not been fiction editors before, the pair read every manuscript and have developed their own prescriptions for what makes an 831 Stories title. The protagonist should be 25 or older — "not young adults and not new adults," Cerulo said. They should be self-actualized in a way that love doesn't complete them, but is "additive." There must always be sex on the page.

And, interestingly, the publishing house prefers that its authors provide only scant descriptions of their characters' physical appearance.

"When you leave out those physical descriptors, it does open the opportunity for people to personalize stories," Mazur said. "And that's what's so transformative about romance — the personal takeaways that each person has."

Before launching, they made the unorthodox move of cold emailing to recruit writers who they admired. Veurink is a Substack writer and a brand consultant, while Upasna Barath, the author of "Comedic Timing," is a performer.

Instead of a full manuscript, they asked only for an outline and one chapter. Each author received an advance for the books, which are published in partnership with Authors Equity and distributed by Simon & Schuster, and also share in the profits from merchandise and future adaptations, the founders said.

By leaning on writers who aren't typically romance novelists, the company sits at the border between "the traditional romance community and the broader world," potentially appealing to both hard-core genre readers and first timers, said Sanjana Basker, a TikTok book influencer and a graduate student at Columbia University.

Now the publishers receive pitches from writers across the media landscape. In 2026, their roster will include a cookbook author, a parenting influencer and a screenwriter.

Borrelli

from Page 1

Was there a lovelier physical book this year than **"Syme's Letter Writer,"** an ode to correspondence by the New Yorker's Rachel Syme? Not really, and yet, that didn't make the final 10, either. Alexis Okeowo's **"Blessings and Disasters,"** a portrait of Alabama, deserved more readers. Same goes for **"The Autobiography of H. Lan Thao Lam,"** Lana Lin's communing with the spirit of Gertrude Stein, via Naperville. And same for Kevin Nguyen's irreverent, prescient **"My Documents,"** which pictures the U.S. government putting Vietnamese-Americans in camps. And Virginia Feito's delightfully cold **"Victorian Psycho."** And Jeff Chang's great Bruce Lee biography, **"Water Mirror Echo."**

All of those and about 40 others should be in this top 10, too.

Still ... what's here? I'm jealous of anyone reading these for the first time. In no order:

"Clam Down: A Metamorphosis" by Anelise Chen. Technically a memoir, though so hilarious and original, it's impossible to read as genre at all but rather, a novelistic tale of a writer weathering a divorce who opens a typo-ridden email from her mother, imploring her to "clam down." Surrounded by social media, buried in research, Chen decides to embrace the metaphor: Should she retreat into a hard shell? Or open up and trudge on?

"Red Scare: Blacklists, McCarthyism and the Making of Modern America" by Clay Risen. I can't quite put my finger on why, but the year was agog in echoing histories of hypocritical censorship and political bullying that eventually left the nation is a different place. A powerfully patient narrative account that goes beyond the familiar images of Congressional hearings and Joe McCarthy to the everyday fear-mongering that created a network of repression — and the everyday courage that, one day, toppled the hysteria.

"The Gossip Columnist's Daughter" by Peter Orner. The best Chicago novel in ages. Rooted in Orner's real background as a Highland Park native with family connections, a mesh of obsession, broken friendships and the nagging persistence of family legends, bundled into a true crime that was never solved: the murder of Karyn "Cookie" Kupcinet.

"A Guardian and a Thief" by Megha Majumdar. Two tales and a clock. A mother's passport is stolen just before she gets her son and father escape to Ann Arbor. A pickpocket will do anything to feed his family. An instant classic, set against societal collapse and the wrenching calculations and contradictions families make to survive.

"Sick and Dirty: Hollywood's Gay Golden Age and the Making of Modern Queerness" by Michael Koresky. An uncommonly fun and sophisticated dark cultural history that will drive you back to film. Did you know the Hollywood production codes (1934-1968) that buried gay life started with a meeting at Loyola University? Do you know *how* gay filmmakers carried on nevertheless, with clandestine cleverness? An absorbing landmark of film criticism at a moment when the practice itself is fading out.

"Lost in the Dark, and Other Excursions" by John Langan. Not a household name, but someday. Langan, the most bracingly classical of the new horror writers, is swinging for greatness here, with dense nail-biters that draw on the erudite, swirling language of Shelley and Lovecraft but lean back into the character-driven snap of Stephen King. An author tracks the extras on a horror DVD to a bleak history. Notes to a review of a Frankenstein novel lead to a vast darkness. An essay on horror lit grows very nasty. Langan, never far from the past, yet fond of experiments, reads like the future.

"Do Admit! The Mitford Sisters and Me" by Mimi Pond. A sprawling, virtuosic group-biography of the six infamous sisters who escaped their country estate, then tumbled through a 20th century of scandals, fascist friends and journalistic triumphs. Page after page, Pond, one of our great underrated cartoonists, finds original paths through history.

"A Marriage at Sea: A True Story of Love, Obsession and Shipwreck," by Sophie Elmhirst. A word-of-mouth smash over the summer with good reason: What begins as survival tale — an economical, riveting account of a couple in 1972 whose boat is struck by a whale, then spend months alone in the open ocean, starving and despondent — heads to surprising depths once they are found, and are uncomfortable with dry land, the way their story gets told and their own feelings about what exactly survived the disaster.

"King of Ashes" by S.A. Cosby. Proof that crime fiction isn't always a churn of brand-name antiheroes. And yet Cosby's star continues upward, reminding us again that broad appeal and comfortable beats doesn't mean empty writing. His latest may be inspired by "The Godfather" — a son returns to his family crematory business and ailing patriarch, only to face a power grab and the blowback of revenge — but it deposits you in seriously Shakespearean territory. Blissfully pulpy and mournfully tragic, all at once.

"Murderland: Crime and Bloodlust in the Time of Serial Killers," by Caroline Fraser. You know the feeling you'd follow some writers anywhere? I felt it with Fraser in "Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder," her 2018 Pulitzer winner. The grip only tightens here, dragging you into a scary, thrillingly reckless patchwork of correlation. The premise, that ecological pollution in the Pacific Northwest of the '60s and '70s bred a generation of neurologically-singed human monsters, likely is not airtight, and yet, a great writer can root you. Part true crime, part corporate screed, part coming-of-age memoir, part Rachel Carson, part victim memorial, Fraser constructs an enormous mood board dense with villains and propulsive detail, crossing, crisscrossing.

A masterpiece, and the best book I read all year.

cborrelli@chicagotribune.com

While movie theaters struggle, Chicago's historic Music Box is adding a third screen

By Nina Metz
Chicago Tribune

Times have been tough for movie exhibitors thanks to the one-two punch of streaming and a pandemic, but Chicago's Music Box Theatre is going strong regardless. The historic art house cinema on Tuesday announced the addition of a new 100-seat third screen at its Southport Avenue location, as well as the purchase of another historic venue in the Midwest with the Heights Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Locally, the new theater space is being carved out of two adjacent storefronts, paid for by the Music Box's owners as well as a community development grant from the City of Chicago. The additional venue will create more flexibility for festivals, extended runs and filmmaker events. The space is expected to open in summer 2026 and it comes on the heels of some improvements made to the existing theaters last year, with the installation of new, more comfortable seating.

In Minneapolis, the Heights Theater is a "renowned 1926 atmospheric movie palace featuring original plasterwork, crystal chandeliers, and its signature Mighty Wurlitzer organ," according to a statement. Its programming history has much in common with that of the Music Box — with first-run showings alongside older films, as well as the ability to screen 70mm prints — so both the historic nature of the venue and its focus will be familiar territory for the new owners. The theater will close briefly after its annual New Year's Day screening of "Holiday Inn" and reopen Jan. 9 with "Father Mother Sister Brother," the new comedy from director Jim Jarmusch starring Cate Blanchett.

A promotion for the movie "Oppenheimer" in 70 mm format is displayed on the marquee at the Music Box Theatre in Chicago. **JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE 2023**

Per the announcement, the Music Box intends to maintain annual traditions including its "White Christmas" screenings, its Celebration of Cinema festival, a film noir series and an Alfred Hitchcock series, while adding some new programming: Late-night screenings on the weekend and Saturday morning cinema geared towards kids.

"The Heights has always been about celebrating great films with great people," said Tom Letness, outgoing owner. "I'm thrilled to pass it on to Music Box Theatre, whose passion for cinema and commitment to presentation match what I've built here."

Actors discover emotional power of 'Hamnet'

Zhao's film portrait of marriage in grief, literary greatness

By Jake Coyle
Associated Press

During the emotionally wrecking final scene of "Hamnet," Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal had an issue.

"There were moments where the camera was obstructing us," Buckley recalls. "We were like: 'No, we have to see each other.'"

"And then the minute we did see each other, it was like 'Oh, no,'" Mescal says, laughing. "What a glorious thing."

In "Hamnet," Chloé Zhao's adaptation of Maggie O'Farrell's prize-winning 2020 novel, Mescal plays William Shakespeare and Buckley his wife, Agnes. It's a speculative drama with basis in historical fact. One of the couple's three children, Hamnet, died in 1596 at age 11. Within a handful of years, "Hamlet" would premiere at the Globe Theatre. The names, scholars have noted, were essentially interchangeable in 16th-century England.

Zhao's film, in theaters now, imagines the possible connection between the death of the Shakespeares' son and the birth of the playwright's greatest work. It's a portrait of a marriage, in grief and literary greatness. In many ways, it's also a movie about seeing and being seen. Both William and Agnes are drawn together as misunderstood near-outcasts. William is dismissed as "a pasty-faced scholar." Agnes is branded a "forest witch." Gaps of misperception and solitude are bridged by love in the film's first half, and art in its overwhelming final act.

In both cases, the actors' eyes tell much of the story. Their performances — raw, earthy, soulful — have been hailed as among the best of the year. Both are widely expected to land Oscar nominations. Though they acted in separate timelines in Maggie Gyllenhaal's "The Lost Daughter" (2021), "Hamnet" is the first time on screen together for the two young, acclaimed Irish stars.

"We entered the film at the perfect juncture. I had huge respect for Jessie and loved spending time with her," Mescal says. "But we were also at the point where we didn't know each other all that well. So there was a kind of mystery."

Before beginning production, Zhao staged a chemistry read for the two. It might go down as the most unnecessary chemistry read in Hollywood history. "We'd forget that we were saying lines," says Mescal, sitting beside Buckley.

"There was such a kinetic energy already between us," Buckley agrees. "It just felt so possible."

Little is known about Shakespeare's life and even less Agnes'. That meant the actors were using their own experiences as artists to try to better understand their characters. Each day of production, Zhao led the cast in a meditation of three deep breaths, a practice she has continued at screenings.

"As actors, sometimes people just want you to wear a mask and put coats on, and I never find that satisfying," Buckley says. "What Chloé wants you to do is move somewhere deeper within yourself to meet the person you're going to come to understand. It's not about masks. If anything, it's about becoming more human and pulling off a layer of skin that you've maybe kept around yourself too tightly."

Zhao, the Oscar-winning "Nomadland" director who last directed the Marvel movie "Eternals," says she challenged Mescal and Buckley to play "extreme masculine and extreme feminine." Since emerging with a pair of lyrical Lakota dramas, "Songs My Brothers Taught Me" and "The Rider," Zhao has refined a rough-hewn naturalism that actors gravitate toward. To find a very different Shakespeare, she relied on those instincts.

"What we have to do as artists is try to find that commonality that transcends time and space and gender and religion," says Zhao. "You say: What is the bone-deep humanity of that man that is also in Paul Mescal? That's my job, to open that portal."

"Hamnet" dares to suppose that all art, even something as epochal as "Hamlet," comes from somewhere profoundly personal. Mescal's Shakespeare, for instance, doesn't go around eloquently spouting verses.

Jessie Buckley, left, and Paul Mescal, seen Sept. 7 in Toronto, star in director Chloé Zhao's film "Hamnet." **CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP**

"How boring would that be!" says Mescal. "Anyone who writes like that isn't walking around waxing lyrical. I think there's a real engine underneath him. There's someone who wanted to escape his life and love his life at the same time. He loved his life and loved his work. This constant conflict in him, charging around his life, restless-like."

"That's also you," interjects Buckley.

"That was just the version of him that made the most sense to me," Mescal responds.

"Hamnet" reaches a remarkable crescendo in a performance of "Hamlet" at the Globe that opens up deep wells of sorrow and oceans of empathy. It has already become one of the most talked-about finales of the year, and it's when the movie's belief in the transference of feeling becomes most palpable. Yet, cameras aside, it was a scene they struggled to find.

"To be completely honest, we had gone on this ginormous, epic journey of the heart. We got to the Globe. I had not a clue what to do. I was totally lost. I think Chloé was lost," Buckley says. "The Globe flooded. There was a rainstorm for two days. You go on this huge journey and you're like: Where does this end?"

But on the third day, something clicked for Buckley when composer Max Richter's "On the Nature of Daylight" came on her playlist. She shared it with Zhao and something shifted.

"Sometimes as an actor, you feel like you have to do it yourself," Buckley says. "She was like this lone wolf in the middle of this ocean of people. I realized on the third day how everyone around me was crucial. It became about surrendering to the community of feeling."

The scene's power is owed, also, to the hundreds of extras who play a poignant role. Buckley's and Mescal's eyes are locked on one another, but the play's the thing — not just its transmutation of their private grief, but the play's resonance with all around them.

"Why we go to the cinema, why we go to the theater, why we tell stories is for these places to contain the parts of ourselves that are too hard to hold by ourselves," says Buckley. "There's this unspoken ocean between the person sitting next to you and the story, and the play is the vessel through which that transcends through."

Buckley shakes her head. "It was incredible. Standing at the lip of the stage, I could just feel a tsunami of 300 people behind me opening up their hearts."

Donnelly makes her theater kid dreams come true

By Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

When she was just a child, Meg Donnelly gave off a serious theater kid vibe. At 5 years old, her favorite musical role wasn't the sunny "Annie." It was Mimi from "Rent," the struggling erotic dancer who is also a heroin addict.

Donnelly grew up to become a film and television star through her breakout role in Disney's music-filled "Zombies" franchise and the ABC sitcom "American Housewife." She has also appeared on "The Masked Singer" and has a new EP, "dying art."

The New Jersey-raised actor recently returned to her first love — theater. Donnelly has made her Broadway debut in "Moulin Rouge! The Musical," playing cabaret star Satine in the jukebox hit until March.

The show about the goings-on in a turn-of-the-century Parisian nightclub has been updated with tunes like "Single Ladies" and "Firework," alongside the big hit "Lady Marmalade."

This interview with Donnelly has been edited for clarity and length.

Meg Donnelly, who stars as Satine, appears during the curtain call after making her Broadway debut Nov. 11 in "Moulin Rouge! The Musical" in New York City. **BONEAU/BRYAN-BROWN**

Q: What was your Broadway debut like?
A: It was really surreal. I feel like I've been working towards this since I was a little girl. When I was younger, Broadway was the only option. I was a full theater kid — that's all I wanted to do. And, you know, life just took me in different directions. But this is something that I feel I was born to do and just being onstage (opening) night, it kind of all just makes sense.

Q: What's your favorite musical?
A: My favorite musical of all time is "Rent." I saw it a lot when I was younger — maybe when I was too young — and my dream role has always been Mimi, which is really funny. So when I was like 5 or 6 auditioning for theater, they would be like, "What's your dream role?" And everyone would be, like, "Annie" or "Matilda" and I'd be like, "Mimi!" They'd be like, "Oh my God, this kid!" So, it is very full circle because "Moulin Rouge" is based on the same opera as "Rent." Satine is kind of Mimi.

Q: So much of your career makes this a natural step. You played a young woman who sang in a school production of "Little Shop of Horrors" on "American Housewife" and everything about the "Zombie" franchise screams musical theater. How do you describe your path here?
A: There's not a right or wrong path. You know, there's so many things in my career where I'm like, "Oh, I wish I'd done that" or "Maybe I should have gone that way." I'm a very chronic over-thinker. But it really doesn't matter. I will say, being a part of Disney definitely changed my life.

Q: Another Broadway-adjacent step was when you were in the cast of NBC's live telecast of "The Sound of Music" in 2013. You were the understudy for Louisa von Trapp?
A: Yes, I understudied Louisa and Ella Watts-Gorman, who played Louisa, was so talented and amazing. I was praying that nothing happened to her. We weren't really taught much. We knew the music, but that was pretty much it, so I was like, "Dear God, please, let everything go OK."

Q: Audra McDonald starred in that, right?
A: Listening to her sing on set was one of the best gifts I've ever been given.

Q: What about your own music?
A: That is something that I really want to pursue. I feel like writing my own music is just so therapeutic for me, and I love performing onstage. Having to do a new show every single night and making everything different and feeding off the energy of the different crowd — that's what I want to do with my own music as well.

Q: You did theater growing up alongside Helen J. Shen, who created her part in "Maybe Happy Ending"? Would you also like to originate a role one day?
A: That was such a cool thing to watch her go through, and it's so personal, something that she built with them. That would be really, really cool. Just to have that connection to it as well. So, yeah, originating would (really be) great.

AI hit sparks questions of attribution, ethics

Digitally generated song built on sound of musician Brown

By Jonathan Landrum Jr.
Associated Press

Blanco Brown has recorded a version of the AI-created song. **EVAN AGOSTINI/INVISION 2024**

When an AI-generated country song called "Walk My Walk" hit No. 1 on Billboard's country digital song sales chart recently, it was credited to a fictional artist named Breaking Rust — a white, digitally generated avatar that didn't exist two months ago.

But the song's vocal phrasing, melodic shape and stylistic DNA came from someone who does exist: Grammy-nominated country artist Blanco Brown, a Black music artist who has worked with Britney Spears, Childish Gambino and Rihanna.

And he had no idea.

"I didn't even know about the song until people hit me up about it," said Brown, whose 2019 country rap hit "The Git Up" helped usher in a new, hybrid era of country crossover. He didn't learn about the chart-topping AI track until his phone was flooded with messages from friends.

"My phone just kept blowing up," he said. "Somebody said: Man, somebody done typed your name in the AI and made a white version of you. They just used the Blanco, not the Brown."

The moment is the latest example of how generative AI is upending the music industry, giving anyone the ability to instantly create seemingly new songs by typing prompts into a chat window, often using models trained on real artists' voices and styles without their knowledge.

The credits for the grit-filled, chant-heavy track "Walk My Walk" list Aubierre Rivaldo Taylor as one of the song's creators, with streaming platforms such as Apple Music and Spotify identifying him as the songwriter and producer. In recent months, Taylor has also been credited as the songwriter and producer behind Defbeatsai — one of several X-rated, AI-generated country artists that exploded across social media last year.

The Defbeatsai ecosystem, however, connects back to another figure in Brown's past: Abraham Abushmais, a collaborator Brown once jokingly called "Abe Einstein" for his sharp studio instincts. Abushmais co-wrote a couple of songs on Brown's 2019 album "Honeysuckle & Lightning Bugs" and is listed as the developer of Echo, an obscure AI-powered music generator app promoted on one of Defbeats.ai's Instagram pages with a link encouraging users to "make your own hit country song."

Brown said he wasn't notified about any involvement in the AI hit, and the collaborator he once mentored has since become unreachable.

"Abe's number changed," Brown said. "We used to talk. I ain't heard from him in a year or two."

The digital avatar fronting "Walk My Walk," a white, AI-generated country singer built with a vocal approach modeled on Brown's sound, is where the moment shifted from eerie to uncomfortable.

"It's a white AI man with a Black voice," Brown said. "And he's singing like a Negro spiritual."

For Brown, the shock quickly gave way to action. He went into the studio and recorded his cover of the song, which was recently released. He also put out a reworked derivative of the track with new lyrics and a new arrangement.

Brown's management said his response to the song is a direct challenge to the legal, ethical and policy void surrounding AI-generated music. He wants to use his own lived experience to force the industry and lawmakers to confront who owns art and what happens when technology outpaces the rights of the human creators it imitates.

"If someone is going to sing like me, it should be me," he said.

For musicians and educators, the success of "Walk My Walk" made one thing clear: AI-generated music has leapt from internet experiment to commercial disruptor.

"We are entering a very strange and unprecedented period of both creation and industry," said Josh Antonuccio, director of the Ohio University Music Industry Summit. "AI has essentially democratized the act of music creation itself."

That democratization has come with no guardrails. Major record labels sued Suno and Udio — popular AI song generators — accusing them of training their models on copyrighted recordings without permission.

"These companies trained their platforms on a volume of recorded music without permission," Antonuccio said. "It leaves creators in this strange purgatory where they're not getting compensated."

Some labels have now shifted from lawsuits to negotiation. Universal Music Group recently settled a copyright infringement lawsuit with Udio and signed a new licensing agreement with the platform. Warner Music Group followed with its own deal, partnering with Suno in what the companies called a "first-of-its-kind" agreement to develop licensed AI music that compensates and protects artists.

The sudden success of "Walk My Walk" also raises questions about the tools enabling it. Educators say most chart-ready AI vocals today are generated through systems like Suno and Udio, which let users create full songs by prompting musical genres, vocal styles and lyrical ideas.

For Brown, this situation is a legal and cultural issue.

He spent years navigating country music as a Black artist who blends gospel, hip-hop, pop and twang. He has been nominated for a Grammy and embraced by the Recording Academy, but country radio hasn't given him consistent traction.

Meanwhile, an AI song built on his vocal identity and paired with a white avatar went straight to No. 1, a dynamic he says reflects a familiar pattern in Nashville: innovation from Black artists being reattributed.

"He created something with my tone and gave it a white face," Brown said. "(Race) is an understatement in Nashville."

Music educators say the issue goes beyond authorship. While AI tools can convincingly approximate sound, they aren't able to capture the source of it.

"There are things a real artist conveys that the digital part never will," said Shelton "Shelly" Berg, dean of the University of Miami's Frost School of Music and a Grammy-nominated pianist. "They occupy fundamentally different spaces."

Berg said AI tracks can sometimes be polished in an eerie manner, but the intangible elements of performance remain out of reach.

"There's an energy between an artist and an audience that happens in real time that you can't see but you can feel," he said. "We are so many light years away from that happening in an AI environment."

Brown insists he's not anti-AI. He's not even angry with Abushmais. He's proud that his sound inspired someone, but he understands what the moment exposes. For him, the arrival of an AI artist built on his tone only underscored something he has learned repeatedly in Nashville: Talent is one thing, but how the industry assigns value is often something else.

"I go through this every day with real people who steal and borrow from what I do," Brown said. "So I don't care if it's a robot or a human. They're not giving me credit anyway."

In a fast-changing landscape, Brown said artists will have one final advantage that machines can't mimic.

"Real artists are always going to prevail," he said. "Purpose lives where greed can't."

NONFICTION REVIEWS

Case made for US war's global nature

Next July marks 250 years since a handful of upstart American colonies declared independence from Britain. A war was fought, as we all know, and almost immediately after it was over, Richard Bell asserts in "The American Revolution and the Fate of the World," a "collective amnesia" took hold.

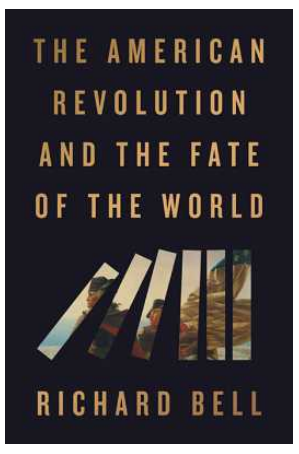
The preference for historians and Americans alike was to tell a simple story, one in which "plucky homegrown heroes faced down all the king's horses and all the king's men, all on their own." The truth is, Bell says, the country's founding required "a world war in all but name."

The transnational nature of the conflict can't be understated, he goes on. Its reach was felt far and wide, so much so that it is "not an exaggeration to say that the American Revolution set much of the world as we know it in motion," to the delight of some and the horror of others, namely Indigenous and enslaved peoples.

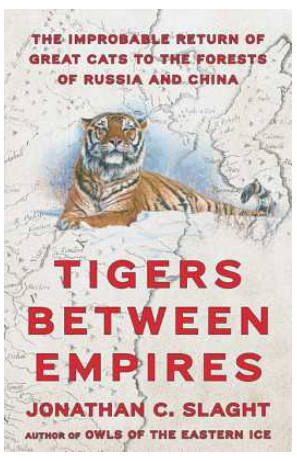
To get at that immensity, Bell advances seven core arguments that encompass migration, the war's human cost, the improbability of its outcome, naval power, trade, imperial crackdowns in other colonies and the spread of liberty. He then filters it all through individual experience — Molly Brant, for instance, a Mohawk woman who worked as a broker, spy and refugee-camp coordinator. It's a crackerjack way to illustrate the heart of the conflict and its scope.

The book's tone can be uneven, however. Bell's occasional colloquialisms prove welcome, but his awkward direct addresses, not so much. Moreover, Bell sometimes strains to make revolutionary connections.

Despite that, Bell — who is British by birth but an American by choice — is an apt guide for readers revisiting "the shot heard round the world" and its ramifications. His "The American Revolution and the Fate of the World" is a solid addition to any semiquincentennial reading list. — *Maren Longbella, Minnesota Star Tribune*



'THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE FATE OF THE WORLD'
By Richard Bell; Riverhead Books, 416 pages, $35.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TIGERS BETWEEN EMPIRES
JONATHAN C. SLAGHT
AUTHOR OF OWLS OF THE EASTERN ICE

'TIGERS BETWEEN EMPIRES'
By Jonathan C. Slaght; Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 512 pages,

Jonathan C. Slaght's "Tigers Between Empires" is a deep look at the Wildlife Conservation Society's Siberian Tiger Project, which begins in the early 1990s and covers three decades of exhausting research in the remote, frigid Russian Far East landscape of the endangered Amur (also known as Siberian) tiger.

A team of U.S. and Russian scientists tracked, collared and observed as one of the world's largest wild cats hunted, raised cubs and died — often via poaching, logging and loss of habitat. The goal was to figure out what these tigers, facing extinction, needed to survive. There's Olga, Natasha, Katya and Kristina, whose individual personalities and circumstances are at the heart of the best chapters, many of which read like thrillers.

Akin to his "Owls of the Eastern Ice," Slaght shines his scientific-yet-soulful spotlight on one of the world's most amazing creatures, so that we might better understand how to live peaceably in one another's company.

"Between Empires" is aptly named as it takes place along the rugged Russia-China border. But the title is political, as well, in that these creatures and their researchers were affected by the swiftly changing attitudes following the fall of the Soviet Union. The wild cats sit, too, in the uncomfortable space between the empires of knowing and unknowing, where an animal is seen as something that is rightfully a part of nature versus as a predator that should be "removed."

The tigers at the heart of this fascinating survival-revival tale are individual souls, part of that ancient relationship to which we all belong: nature. How to save them? It's complicated. But near the end, a farmer decides not to shoot a tiger because he has come to believe that she was "as much a part of this place as he was."

This, Slaght notes, was tiger conservation working on a personal level. — *Michiela Thuman, Minnesota Star Tribune*

FICTION REVIEWS

Fiery student-teacher fling resurfaces

Irish author Claire-Louise Bennett's new novel, "Big Kiss, Bye-Bye," sees its unnamed narrator wrestle with reawakened memories of an intensely passionate schoolgirl relationship with a teacher.

These emotions from 30 years earlier meld with the woman's feelings about other relationships, primarily an adult romance with a different older man. It's an entrancing and exacting examination of the persistence of memory and those "half-buried distorted things (that) have a habit of rearing their noxious malformed heads again."

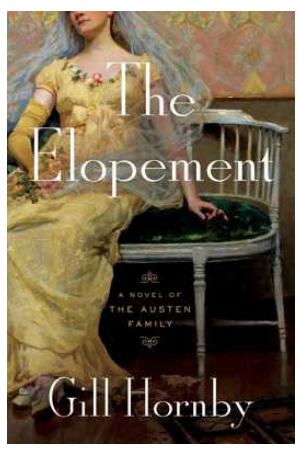
When the novel opens, in October 2021, the woman hasn't seen former lover Xavier for three months, since she rebuffed his request for a kiss at their first post-pandemic meeting. She cherishes their friendship, but is decades younger than the septuagenarian and no longer attracted to him. He wants love or nothing, so says goodbye and then days later emails about her latest book. Reminiscing about their time together, her genuine affection makes her tend to explain away his often passive-aggressive behavior.

Around the same time, the woman's former high school English teacher writes to her, triggering memories of a day in his classroom when she was distracted because "one of his colleagues (had been) fooling around with me." That colleague was her philosophy teacher, Robert Turner, with whom she had a fiery fling that seemingly ended badly.

Bennett's prose is full of utterly original imagery, and the novel's shifting perspective keeps the narrator's — or the author's — conclusions nebulous.

The narrator's intense introspection can become mind-numbingly repetitive at times, but it is all part of the woman's almost dispassionate assessment of the profound effects her past relationships have had on her. Her prescription would likely be endorsed by other authors revisiting the past: "Keep writing. Keep making books. Keep dropping them on people." — *Cory Oldweiler, Minnesota Star Tribune*

'BIG KISS, BYE-BYE'
By Claire-Louise Bennett; Riverhead Books, 224 pages,



'THE ELOPEMENT'
By Gill Hornby; Pegasus Books, 480 pages, $28.95.

If you're a fan of Jane Austen or the PBS series "Miss Austen" — which was based on a Gill Hornby novel — I bet you'll cotton to the author's latest, "The Elopement."

Subtitled "A Novel of the Austen Family," "The Elopement" takes place a couple of decades before "Miss Austen," in which Jane's sister Cassandra tried, "Emma"-like, to arrange the romances of her relatives while also struggling to preserve her late sister's literary legacy.

The bad news for Cassandra fans is that she's barely in "The Elopement," set a few years after Jane Austen's 1817 death. A couple of Austens pop in, but the book is primarily about the Austen sisters' niece Fanny and Fanny's stepdaughter Mary. As ever, both face questions of love and money.

Hornby has a fine sense of Austen's language and wit. "The Elopement" slides effortlessly into the world of two centuries ago, with its calling cards, corsets and head colds that quickly become fatal.

We may be vexed by the dictates of long-ago manners, but we understand why these characters behave the way they do because Hornby immerses us so fully in their sensibilities.

The main character of "The Elopement" is in doubt for most of the book. It seems to be Fanny, who marries for money and turns her back on her own family, including her brother Ned. Fanny may be the only person in "The Elopement" who can't see that Ned is falling for her stepdaughter Mary.

As Mary's perspective takes over the second half of "The Elopement," the book gets stronger. The protagonists of novels don't have to be likable, of course, and Fanny decidedly isn't. But these characters are inspired by actual people that the Austens knew, and there's a sense that the author feels stuck with Fanny.

It's not a huge problem as the verve of Hornby's prose and the skill with which she creates Austen's era carry the book along. — *Chris Hewitt, Minnesota Star Tribune*

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Joffrey Company Artist Nae Kojima. Photo by Todd Rosenberg.

Blanc greatest mystery of 'Knives Out' movies

Craig, Johnson have colored in character over course of trilogy

By Jake Coyle
Associated Press

The greatest mystery in Rian Johnson's "Knives Out" movies might be Benoit Blanc.

Over the course of three films, Johnson and Daniel Craig have stingily dropped clues to Blanc's past and personal life. Since Blanc first introduced himself in "Knives Out" as "a respectful, quiet, passive observer ... of the truth," following the breadcrumbs has been a sport of its own.

There are, for instance, the vague, offhand references to cases he has cracked before: something with a tennis champion, another with a ballet dancer and, in the latest chapter, "Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery," we hear about something dastardly at the Kentucky Derby that he solved.

Blanc has been profiled in The New Yorker and a guest on "The View." He appears to live with Hugh Grant. He dislikes the board game Clue. Having been caught singing Sondheim and, in the new one, humming "Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat," from "Cats," we know he loves musical theater.

Over the course of the "Knives Out" trilogy, Johnson and Craig have colored in Blanc with sporadic and comic revelations, adding subtle, and sometimes personal, characteristics.

"I'm not as much into musical theater as Rian," Craig says, sitting beside his director in a recent interview.

"So he claims in front of a microphone," adds Johnson.

Every "Knives Out" movie is wholesale change. New setting. New case. New cast of characters. But Craig and Johnson are the mainstays. Together, they've turned Blanc, the last of the gentleman sleuths, into one of the greatest protagonists in recent movies.

In "Wake Up Dead Man," now in theaters before streaming on Netflix, Blanc takes up the case of a monsignor (Josh Brolin) who dies mysteriously in the middle of a church service. Of the movie's many delights — among them, Josh O'Connor's co-leading performance as a priest under suspicion and a cast of parishioners including Andrew Scott, Jeremy Renner and Glenn Close — is seeing Craig continue to find new little wrinkles to Blanc.

Rather than being set in stone, Blanc has evolved. Take that accent. The first script, Johnson recalls, described "the slightest hint of a Southern lilt." But Craig, taking inspiration from Tennessee Williams and Shelby Foote, pushed the accent closer to, as Chris Evans' character says in "Knives Out": a "Kentucky-fried Foghorn Leghorn drawl." In "Glass Onion," he laid it on even thicker, part of a scheme revealed later in the film.

"My biggest fear was that it would devolve," Craig says, chuckling. "If it ever becomes pastiche, it's like, 'Whoa, let's get out of here.' God knows I'm not comparing myself to Gene Wilder, but the way Gene Wilder did comedy was: It's all through truth. As long as you're as truthful as you can get in that situation, the funny comes out."

As thoroughly established in the role as Craig is, he very nearly missed out on Benoit Blanc. Craig was initially unavailable for "Knives Out" due to production on "No Time to Die." Johnson sought other possible actors.

"It was literally five weeks later, we were shooting. We didn't think you were available," Johnson says. "Then something happened where suddenly you guys got delayed for three months, and we had a window."

"I read it, and I was shocked that someone would send this to me," Craig says. "Overjoyed. I saw it from the off-go. I read it, and I visualized it. It's a testament to his writing. I mean, come on. Benoit Blanc."

In forming the role, Craig took inspiration from Jacques Tati's debonair but bumbling Monsieur Hulot and Cary Grant's elegant panache in "To Catch a Thief." He combed through out-of-print books of Southern expressions.

Along the way, Craig has improvised some of Blanc's best expressions. In "Wake Up Dead Man," he suddenly blurts out, as if moved by the swelling whodunit hijinks: "Scooby Dooby Doo!" A sip of Jeremy Renner-sponsored hot sauce in "Glass Onion" led to the infamous "Halle Berry!"

"All of the best lines in there are things Daniel just brings," says Johnson. "He says, 'What about this?' and I start laughing. And it's the best line in the movie."

"I have a security team, and there's a guy that says it," Craig says of the etymology of "Halle Berry." "I stole it. I said, 'Can I have that?' and he said 'Yep.'"

For Craig and Johnson, Blanc has been an ongoing conversation. "Wake Up Dead Man," the most sincere of the three mysteries, deals significantly with matters of faith and religion. The two worked to sharpen Blanc's perspective. In the film, he declares himself "a proud heretic. I kneel at the altar of the rational."

Actor Daniel Craig, left, seen Nov. 3 with Rian Johnson, stars as Benoit Blanc in the director's latest film in the franchise, "Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery." **MATT LICARI/INVISION**

Then there are the ornate flourishes of dialogue Johnson pens for Blanc. Modeled on Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, Blanc is the knowing product of a rich literary tradition, dusted off for modern times. In contemporary satires, Blanc is the retro lynchpin.

That means Craig delivering lines like "I suspect foul play" silhouetted against a fireplace, and vowing to uncover "what this flock of wicked wolves is hiding" while framed in a stained-glass window.

"Delicious," Craig says with a grin.

It's ironic that, on the heels of their own experiences with iconic film series ("Star Wars" for the filmmaker and James Bond for the actor), Johnson and Craig have built a franchise all their own.

"I don't think either of us really thought about it that way," Johnson says. "It's just been making one movie after another, just trying to keep it challenging and fresh for ourselves. It feels almost accidental that suddenly we've made three. It definitely wasn't setting out to build, God forbid, the filthiest word in the universe, IP. We're just trying to make movies."

Yet it's now possible, especially as the two contemplate a fourth "Knives Out" film, that there are young moviegoers who know Craig more as Benoit Blanc than they do that other B-name. If Johnson and Craig do keep "Knives Out" going, even as a two-film deal with Netflix concludes, it will allow Johnson the chance to restock his whodunit cupboard. But it will just as surely offer the opportunity to relaunch, and play with, Blanc.

"I really love, in my mystery detectives, for them to be kind of enigmas. It pointedly doesn't work when you start digging into backstory with the detective," says Johnson. "That's always kind of boring because character is only revealed through action, and the action of a detective is such a strong thing. He's there to solve the case."

Festive feelings flow from new holiday albums

Paisley, Pentatonix, Benét among artists with releases for '25

By Maria Sherman
Associated Press

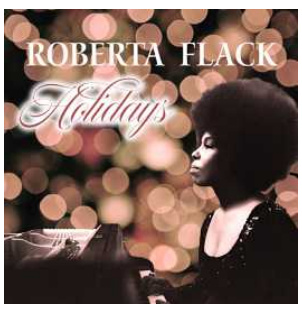
The best way to get festive is to sing along to Christmas classics new and old. But don't know what to press play on? We've got you covered.

In honor of the most wonderful time of the year, here are some of the best new holiday releases for the 2025 season. So grab a loved one, a cup of eggnog and get to listening.

DREAMSTIME

'Greatest Hits Christmas,' LeAnn Rimes: Just ahead of her Christmas tour, country icon LeAnn Rimes released "Greatest Hits Christmas." It's exactly what it sounds like: a mesh of classics and some of her best-known songs from her past holiday albums. There are also new collaborations, like Aloe Blacc on "That Spirit of Christmas" and Gavin DeGraw on "Celebrate Me Home."

'Christmastime,' Trisha Yearwood: Country singer Trisha Yearwood's voice sounds like coming home — making her the ideal talent for a new holiday collection. "Christmastime" is stacked with familiar tunes and perhaps, best of all, features "Merry Christmas, Valentine," a duet with her husband, Garth Brooks. Blast that one at your get-together, and there won't be a dry eye in the house.



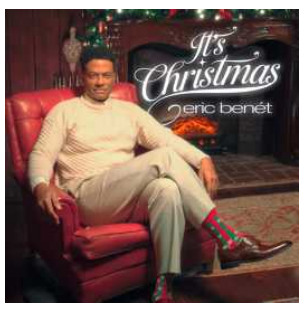
'Holidays,' Roberta Flack: The world lost a giant in February when Roberta Flack, the Grammy-winning singer and pianist, died at age 88. Perhaps best known for her timeless take on "Killing Me Softly With His Song," the Christmas season brings up another reason to celebrate her. A new release, "Holidays," like many on this list, features originals and covers — and a selection of songs from Flack's classic "The Christmas Album."

"Feels Like Christmas," Mickey Guyton: Country powerhouse Mickey Guyton feels like Christmas, and once you dive into these eight tracks, you'll feel it, too. From her rendition of "O Holy Night" to her masterful take on "Do You Want to Build a Snowman?" from Disney's "Frozen," there's a lot to love here.

'Snow Globe Town,' Brad Paisley: Some things just make sense together: peanut butter and jelly, coffee and doughnuts, Brad Paisley and his touring band sitting down in Nashville, Tennessee, to record a charming Christmas album. "Snow Globe Town" boasts eight originals and eight covers — exactly what the heart wants this holiday season. It's the former collection that will really connect, but there are real charms to be found in "Lit," "That Crazy Elf" and the title track.

'Christmas in the City,' Pentatonix: For the a cappella fan, there is no better news than yet another holiday album from Pentatonix. Across 18 tracks, "Christmas in the City" celebrates the magic of cosmopolitan life around the holidays and showcases the group's vocal athletics. Hear them reimagine the songs you know and love as well as introduce a few originals. Start with "Snowing in Paris," which features the R&B-pop star JoJo, and end with "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm," a recording of the Frank Sinatra classic featuring Ol' Blue Eyes himself.

'A Charlie Brown Christmas,' Vince Guaraldi: It's hard to believe, but 60 years ago, the "Peanuts" gang's classic "A Charlie Brown Christmas" aired on television for the first time and became an almost-instant sensation. Part of its charms, of course, must be credited to its whimsical score by jazz pianist Vince Guaraldi. To celebrate such a huge anniversary, Craft Recordings is reissuing its soundtrack — as good a reason as any to revisit these beloved songs.



'It's Christmas,' Eric Benét: R&B singer Eric Benét's first holiday album, "It's Christmas," is filled with warmth. Consider it the sonic equivalent of curling up to a roaring fireplace on a snowy winter's evening. Don't believe us? Well, one listen to his take on "Please Come Home for Christmas" or "Oh Holy Night" will make you a believer. Or better yet, there's "Christmas Morning," featuring Benét's youngest daughters, Lucia and Luna. Tissues — you might want to grab a few.

'The Chess Records Christmas Album,' various artists: Sometimes a compilation album is what a holiday party needs. Chess Records has the answer. "The Chess Records Christmas Album" is an impressive collection of veteran talent. The release features everything from Chuck Berry's "Run Rudolph Run" and the Moonglows' "Hey Santa Claus" to Lenox Avenue's "Little Drummer Boy" and the Salem Travelers' "Merry Christmas to You."

'Evergreen Christmas Sessions,' Hunter Hayes: Hunter Hayes is a more recent name on the country scene compared to a few of the artists listed here, but that simply means he's a fresh voice to discover. His "Evergreen Christmas Sessions" is a brief introduction — just four covers of holiday standards — but it's a charming romp. Start with "Winter Wonderland" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," stay for "Run Run Rudolph" and "Silent Night."

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BALANCING ACT

In gratitude

Think about those who shaped us — from family to recess supervisors, writes Heidi Stevens

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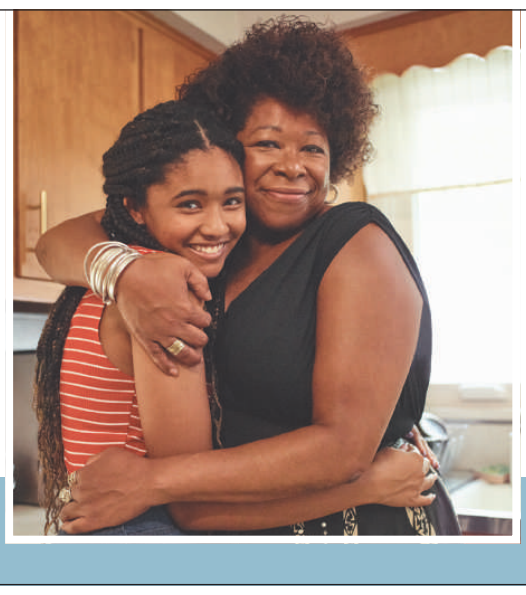
I asked what kind of family Amina wanted. She said, 'A family like yours.' That's when I knew I had to adopt her.

Denise, adopted 17-year-old Amina



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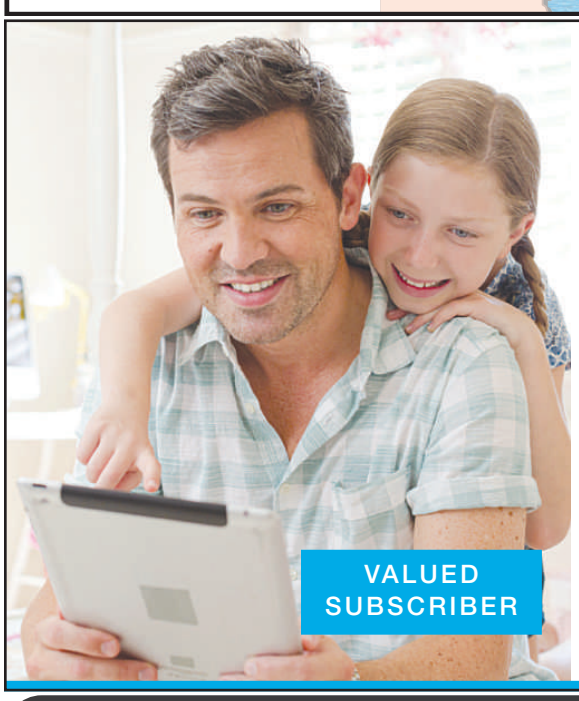

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Family keeping distance years after recovery from addiction

R. Eric Thomas
Asking Eric

Dear Eric: I've just turned 40 this past year. The last 15 years, I was in a horrible drug addiction. I lied and hurt and did terrible things to a lot of people, especially my family.

About eight years ago they officially disowned me. Understandable.

I've cleaned up and got my act together six years ago. At first, I tried to force my way back into their lives, which all refuted. I lashed out, said horrible things and stopped trying to be in their lives. My mom will stop by on my birthday for 10 minutes or so and drop a card off at Christmas. As for my two older brothers and my father, it's radio silence.

I guess what I'm asking is, what do I do to fix this and fast, as I said I've turned 40 this year (and) my parents are both 70. Time is running out, and I couldn't imagine living my life without some kind of acceptance from my father. Or knowing he did or does love me.

My heart breaks at the thought, but this is a real pickle. How can I fix a problem when the ones I need to fix it with won't talk to me? Do I just keep ignoring their existence and put on this façade that I don't care to my wife and 4-year-old son? What picture am I painting to my son, as he's been guilty by association you could say as he has never spent time with his grandparents or uncles or even my nieces and nephews?

— Discombobulated

Dear Discombobulated: There's a saying in some recovery communities — perhaps you've heard it — time takes time. This means that you accumulate sober days one at a time; there's no fast track to long-term recovery, unfortunately. Similarly, there is no fast track to healing years of hurt and distrust. This can be hard to accept. It may feel like you're trapped in your old self and your old actions. But you have to accumulate days in your new way of life one at a time, too.

If you're in a recovery program, like Narcotics Anonymous or SMART Recovery, keep working it. Talk to your sponsor or peer support group about your desire to make amends to your relatives and mend those relationships. Ask yourself if you've acknowledged and apologized for the things that you did during active addiction. If not, a letter doing so is a good place to start.

I know this causes you a lot of pain, and possibly shame. But you're not your past, and you're not the worst things you've done. Let your wife know what you're really feeling. Continuing to put up a façade will only hurt your relationship and could endanger your sobriety. Tell the truth. That's how things change, little by little.

Dear Eric: My husband and I have been married for 15 years. He has children from his first wife, as I have boys from my first marriage. Recently, we were at a birthday party at my stepson's home for one of our grandchildren. The kids, aged 5 through 9, were punching Uncle Rick in the stomach as hard as they could.

The gentleman sitting next to me said, "I do not like the hitting." I said I agree, "I think it is disrespectful." My daughter-in-law just about jumped over the table and said, "It is not disrespectful, they are playing."

They now no longer speak to me, and I have been banished from their house. My stepson said I disrespected my daughter-in-law. I stand by my statement. I do not think kids should be allowed to punch a grown man in the stomach for fun. Your thoughts?

— Banned Mother-in-Law

Dear Mother-in-Law: The punishment doesn't fit the crime. However, it's worth looking at what's happening outside of the frame.

First, the word disrespectful was tossed around a lot. Is it possible that your daughter-in-law felt you were criticizing her parenting in an unwarranted way? This isn't to say that the kids should have been punching their uncle. But Uncle Rick also has bodily autonomy and may have chosen not to stop them because he didn't mind. It's impossible for me to say, but if that was the case, one can see how other people's opinions might not have been welcome.

Your stance on this matter isn't outrageous, though. One hopes that your stepson and daughter-in-law are teaching their children how to play safely and respectfully (and without violence). But even if they've missed the mark on this one, it may be for family unity for you to agree to disagree and tell your daughter-in-law that you didn't mean to malign her parenting, and you'd like to start over.

Send questions to eric@askingeric.com.

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Pause to remember those who shaped us

Heidi Stevens
Balancing Act

DREAMSTIME

I spent a weekend with two lifelong friends recently and we were discussing all the ways our days — lives, really — have a way of getting away from us.

"And you know how guilty we feel doing anything for ourselves," my friend said.

I don't, actually. I mean, I do. In theory. I know how our culture conspires to make us feel guilty. I know I have given into that guilt at different points. I know they have been my unhealthiest points. I know I'm trying not to return to those points.

I know my mom is my North Star on this. (On so many things. But especially on this.)

As a kid, I watched my mom make space and time for things she loved. Birding. Traveling. Long walks in the woods. Restoring natural areas to their native habitat. Always with friends. As an adult, I'm watching her continue to do these things.

If she felt guilty about any of it (and I hope she didn't), she hasn't shown it. Her joy looks purposeful and protected.

My dad, for his part, has never seemed anything but delighted by her joy. He generally gains happiness from other people's happiness and no one more so than my mom. Their marriage is one of the most beautiful pairings I've witnessed in this life. I have tears in my eyes just typing this sentence.

I'm aware that what I saw on the outside doesn't necessarily reveal the full range of conflict — internal or external — on the inside. But I'm also aware that what I saw gave me permission to prioritize friendship and adventure and purpose and joy. Not just permission, actually. A gentle, constant nudge toward them.

I'm also aware, especially in this season of gratitude, that this approach sits at the center of so much of what I cherish most in my life. And I have my mom to thank for that. Thank you, Mom, if you're reading this.

In my Balancing Act Facebook group, I asked readers to share examples of people they're grateful for, people who shaped their approach to life. Stories poured in. Here are a few.

"My maternal grandmother," Susan Bendig wrote. "She became a nurse when women were expected to marry and not have a career. She encouraged me to become whatever I wanted to be. She always encouraged me during the difficult times when my parents did not. She has been gone a very long time, but I still hear her voice when I have to make a serious decision."

Walter Faber wrote about his fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Arlene Langley.

"My dad died that year and I was an angry, lost little boy," Faber wrote. "She encouraged me. Guided me. Taught me. Was patient with me, despite my bad behavior. She understood where it was all coming from. To say that woman saved my life is a gross understatement."

For Judy Ferraro, it's her Uncle Bernie, who died three years ago.

"He introduced me to Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Ella Fitzgerald," Ferraro wrote. "He brought me to Sox games that turned into me being a season-ticket holder for nearly 40 years. He took me to joints in Chicago for pizza and burgers that were different than the suburban pizza and burgers I was used to. He brought me to Old Town, where I developed a love for improv comedy. He loved talking politics with me. And he made me laugh 'til the day he died."

Jessica Bazzarre Byerly will never forget her recess supervisor, Mrs. Carol Saines.

"When I moved in first grade to a new town and a new school, I was really shy and awkward," Byerly wrote. "I had a really hard time making friends. I spent most recesses alone standing to the side in the cold watching the other kids play, praying that recess would end soon."

Mrs. Saines noticed.

"She saw that I didn't have anyone to play with or talk to and she came over one day and just started talking to me. She was wearing this big red coat and I thought she was a super hero. I thought she hung the moon in the sky and I looked for her at recess every day. I kept in touch with her as I grew older and was thankfully able to eventually make some friends my own age. I never forgot her kindness. She passed away far too young from health complications when I was in middle school. Her funeral was the first one for a loved one I ever attended. Whenever I encounter someone who looks lonely, left out or needs a friend, I remember Mrs. Saines and try to go out of my way to make them feel cared for and included."

Terry Parrilli wrote about her dad.

"He had four daughters and never made me think he longed for a son," she wrote. "He taught us how to bait a hook and fish. Vacations to the big outdoors in the Midwest and Canada instilled a love of travel. Because of him, I became a fan of baseball, football, Indy cars, Mad magazine, feeding squirrels, cooking and growing tomatoes. He loved to entertain neighbors, old Navy buddies, co-workers and friends and threw boisterous theme parties. A kid at heart, he created a giant jack-o'-lantern ghost on a ladder with a sheet and broom to put in our window every Halloween. He treated everyone with respect and dignity. The garbage collectors, conductors on the train, custodians, cashiers, busboys and taxi drivers. I try to live my life as he did and make him proud. Sadly, he died young. But his influence on me is constant."

These are just a few of the stories pouring in. I'll include more in another column. If you have one, email me at heidikstevens@gmail.com. Or, even better, share it with someone you know and love so it can shape and sustain them, too.

Heidi Stevens is a Tribune Content Agency columnist. You can reach her at heidikstevens@gmail.com, find her on X at @heidistevens13 or join her Heidi Stevens' Balancing Act Facebook group.

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LIFE

Here to 'free the iPad babies'

Neo-Luddite groups across the country encourage people to transform their relationship with technology

By T.M. Brown
The New York Times

Bucky Baldwin, a member of the Luddite group Lamp Club, speaks during an event to protest smartphones Sept. 26 in New York City.

Lamp Club members hand out information for a gathering to mass delete social media accounts Sept. 26 in the Manhattan borough of New York City.
EMMA ROSE MILLIGAN/THE NEW YORK TIMES PHOTOS

Members of the Luddite group Lamp Club during an event hosted by another Luddite-adjacent group, Free POPS, in Manhattan on Aug. 12. The demonstrators asserted the right to public space — in this case, a plaza operated by the Rockefeller Trust. The rain didn't stop them.

On a recent Saturday, a group of about 100 people in conical gnome hats made of brightly colored manila envelopes gathered near the start of the High Line in the Meatpacking District in New York City's Manhattan and began to march south.

The occasion was the second annual "Scathing Hatred of Information Technology and the Passionate Hemorrhaging of Our Neo-liberal Experience" conference, organized by Lamp Club, an organization for people with Luddite tendencies, or at least aspirations.

The event was generally anti-technology, but why the gnomes?

"Because gnomes come from the earth," Bucky Baldwin, one of the event's organizers, shouted through a megaphone at the crowd, his mop of dark brown hair flopping as he emphasized each word.

Then the next question. Why lamps?

"Lamps just create that atmosphere," said Jackie McVorran, who started Lamp Club in October 2023.

From the start, the group had a penchant for unorthodox gatherings. In keeping with the club's name, McVorran, 19, did not want to meet in conference rooms or classrooms — places with overhead lighting. One of its first events was a "shoes optional" day at the New School campus where she and Baldwin, 21, met as students during an open mic night at the university cafe. They wanted to break down some of the modern anxiety around in-person interaction by putting people in a slightly unfamiliar context.

"Some people felt liberated by it, but other people were like, 'That's crazy. That's nasty,'" recalled McVorran, a native New Yorker who studies psychology, philosophy and anthropology.

She was undeterred. She wanted to understand her classmates who had been so opposed to the event: "I think it all goes back to people feeling alienated from one another."

The Lamp Club is part of a growing ecosystem of "neo-Luddite" groups across the country that encourage people to transform their relationship to technology. Other groups include the Luddite Club, APPstinence and Breaking the (G)Loom — organizations that, for the most part, were started not by parents wishing their teens would get off their devices but by the teens themselves, who fault phones for fraying human connections as well as accelerating inequality and climate change. There are now more than two dozen Luddite clubs in North America, from Ithaca, New York, to Irvine, California.

"People are just sick of this march forward and having to view technology as progress," said Caitlin Begg, a sociologist and founder of Authentic Social, a research lab that studies the effects of technology on everyday life. "They don't want their time and attention to be commodified anymore."

She compared the Lamp Club to the midcentury situationist movement, a coalition of artists and left-wing intellectuals who, as The New York Times once put it, "mixed Surrealism, Marxism and sometimes spectacular hedonism" to level their critiques.

McVorran views the Lamp Club as a project that goes beyond people's relationships with their phones. (She has a flip phone, while Baldwin still uses a smartphone — though he said he planned to start using a Light Phone, a minimalist device that doesn't support social media sites or internet browsers.)

The group has an explicit anti-capitalist bent and takes up larger social issues, like atomization and alienation.

McVorran points to moments of antisocial rudeness that have become commonplace: people on their phones during dinner, not acknowledging someone holding open a door, feeling uncomfortable with boredom.

"People are isolated," she said.

Other happenings are more like conceptual protests in the vein of Bread and Puppet, the political theater project started by Peter Schumann in the 1960s. One evening this summer, for instance, several Lamp Club members, including McVorran and Baldwin, participated in a "dinner party" in a plaza hosted by another Luddite-adjacent group, Free POPS.

The plaza is advertised as open to the public, but it's operated by the Rockefeller Trust and comes with strict rules posted on a plaque at the corner of the building. An upscale steakhouse occupies the ground floor, with imposing windows looking out onto the concrete park.

"These spaces belong to the public," McVorran said. "We wanted to remind everyone of that."

She and the other members of the club — some are friends and classmates of McVorran's and Baldwin's, but others, of all ages, are from around New York City — pride themselves on understanding exactly how far the rules can be bent to avoid being hassled by authorities.

Two members in yellow high-visibility vests toted clipboards with printouts of the plaza's bylaws as well as a schematic that detailed the property line for the adjoining skyscraper. Others collected the lightweight metal tables and chairs that were scattered around the grounds and put them a few feet from the restaurant windows.

A torrential downpour started, but McVorran, Baldwin and more than a dozen others sat down to a mock meal while diners inside gawked. (A restaurant worker eventually lowered the shades.)

On this later afternoon at the High Line protest, as the march moved down the elevated pathway, the group collected a few participants — as well as some quizzical looks. Several people had no idea what the group was objecting to, while others tried to piece it together based on some of the signs and props.

"It's about getting off social media," a passerby said with confidence. His counterpart shrugged.

The group marched down the stairs at the south end of the park before doubling back up Washington Street and stopping in front of a Tesla storefront. They began a chant: "We will free the iPad babies, even if it gives us rabies."

"People in my generation search for themselves through technology," said Maya Giurgi, who joined Lamp Club last year after hearing about it from McVorran, a friend of hers. A trained dancer, Giurgi now leads movement classes for the club.

"I'm trying to pay more attention to the ways I'm distracting myself or running away into my phone," she said.

The "playfulness" of the club, Giurgi, 21, said, makes its events approachable and welcoming.

Not everyone was sympathetic. Carol, 72, a hobby photographer from the Queens borough of New York who declined to give her last name, scoffed at the protest.

"I think it's ridiculous," she said, pointing to the ubiquitous technology being used to document and coordinate the demonstration. "They all have iPhones. I don't get it."

The protest ended with a rally outside the sprawling Apple store in the Meatpacking District. A mock trial was held for an iPhone and an iPad; both were found guilty, and a masked executioner smashed them to pieces.

Baldwin, McVorran and others made impassioned speeches about the antisocial effects of technology. "The people in your phone aren't real," McVorran said. It was a plea for anyone within earshot to engage with the world around them.

Behind her, dozens of people half-listened while they waited in line for the release of the new iPhone, gazing at their screens.

Maintaining magic doesn't have to break parents' bank

By Avery Newmark
Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Feeling the elf-haustion? Does coming up with new adventures for your nighttime Santa spy have you stressed out?

Holly (or Buddy or Snowflake) doesn't need elaborate setups or expensive props to keep the wonder alive.

Here's how to reclaim the joy of the Christmas season while saving your sanity.

Keep it simple, Santa: "The elf just has to move, no need to make it elaborate," Chanda Bell, co-CEO of The Elf on the Shelf, told the New York Post.

Use everyday items like dry-erase boards for messages or arrange shoes into a "choo-choo" train with small treats inside each one.

Your children will love the magic, regardless of complexity.

Budget friendly mischief: Skip the pressure of elaborate gifts or Instagram-worthy setups.

Liz Everett, a mom in the New York City borough of Manhattan, said she spends less than $10 and 20 minutes on daily elf scenes.

"This intentional time to connect with one another is worth it," she explained to the New York Post, proving simple creativity beats costly displays.

For free alternatives, transform household items into magical scenes — kitchen utensils become drum sets, and tissue boxes transform into tiny beds.

Time-saving tricks: Move your elf after bedtime rather than rushing in the morning.

And if you need quick solutions, the official 24-day Ultimate Elf Ideas Kit offers ready-made backdrops and props.

Remember the real magic: "The people that get it, get it," Bell said. Although social media might showcase extravagant elf adventures, the true enchantment lies in family moments.

One Amazon reviewer of the toy wrote: "Children love waking up each morning to search for their elf and discover the creative scenarios it's found itself in. It's a fantastic way to encourage good behavior throughout December as kids believe their elf is watching and reporting to Santa."

DREAMSTIME

Pals find ‘missing piece’ after reconnecting

Friends share their stories of distance, loss, rediscovery

By Cathy Bussewitz
Associated Press

Heather Robb, left, and Laine DePasquantonio, right, take a selfie in April in Denver when they reconnected. The pair say they were inseparable when they were in their 20s. **HEATHER ROBB**

When Jennifer Lea Austin met Molly in second grade, they quickly became best friends. They giggled through classes until the teacher separated them, inspiring them to come up with their own language. They shared sleepovers and went on each other’s family vacations.

But they gradually drifted apart after Austin’s family moved to Germany before the girls started high school. Decades passed before they recently reconnected as grown women.

“Strong friendships really do stay for the long haul,” Austin, 51, said. “Even if there are pauses in between and they fade, that doesn’t mean they completely dissolve or they go forgotten. They’re always there kind of lingering like a little light in the back.”

Early friendships are some of the deepest: the schoolmates who shared bike rides and their favorite candy. The roommates who offered comfort after breakups. The ones who know us, sometimes better than we know ourselves.

But as adults take on jobs and the responsibilities of homes and families, it can be challenging to stay connected with everyone we’ve loved.

Technology plays a role, too. Loneliness has increased since the television was invented and intensified with the introduction of smartphones, according to psychologist Marisa Franco, a University of Maryland assistant clinical professor and author of “Platonic,” a book about the science of attachment.

Once they’ve lost touch with friends, some people are reluctant to reach out, fearing rejection. But most of those on the receiving end appreciate the effort more than we expect, Franco said.

“People are delighted to hear from their old friends and open to connections,” she said.

Franco suggests reminiscing about a shared memory to span the time and distance. It can be something as simple as, “This pic came up and I just realized I wanted to check in on you,” she said. Propose a meetup. If the friend lives far away, try scheduling a phone date to catch up.

Heather Robb and Laine DiPasquantonio were nearly inseparable in their 20s, when they both lived in Boston. They went to concerts and vacationed together. DiPasquantonio was there when Robb met her future husband and attended their wedding as a bridesmaid.

But sometime after Robb married and DiPasquantonio moved to Colorado, their circle of friends scattered. They became busy raising children, juggling jobs and caring for aging parents.

“It’s terrible because you don’t know it’s happening,” Robb, 60, said in a joint interview. “I think it was simply space and time. We were all in different cities, we were all in that busy time of toddlers.”

Years passed with occasional holiday cards and texts but few meaningful interactions. DiPasquantonio saw photos on social media of Robb skiing and traveling with other friends. “I wasn’t sure there was so much room for me, from a distance,” she said.

“Aww, I feel badly about that,” Robb replied. “I would argue that’s the bad side of social media.”

The women found their way back to each other when Robb, president of Heather Robb Communications, had a business trip to Denver in April. She called to see if DiPasquantonio wanted to get dinner. “I didn’t know if she was going to be that happy to hear from me. I actually had some trepidation in reaching out,” Robb said.

When she did, Robb learned her friend was about to undergo surgery for breast cancer. Instead of meeting for dinner, DiPasquantonio, a placement specialist at Harmony Senior Referrals, invited Robb to stay for the weekend. A mutual friend flew out to join them.

“I was so tickled that you called and wanted to get together. It was awesome,” DiPasquantonio, 63, said during their interview. “What took us so long, right?”

They’ve remained close since.

“It just feels so good. It feels like there was a missing piece,” Robb said.

Reyna Dominguez, 18, had the same best friend since first grade. But when Dominguez moved from Long Island to Brooklyn, her friend began college. Dominguez started working in a salon and their schedules didn’t align. About six months passed without communication.

After graduating cosmetology school, Dominguez texted her friend to share the news.

“I was a bit anxious that she was not going to respond. But she did, and I was so relieved and happy,” Dominguez said.

Now they’re in touch about once a month and planning to get together.

“It’s important to stay in touch because sometimes I do get lonely, like I have no one to really talk to,” Dominguez said. “But with her, she knows all about my life.”

Dominguez encourages anyone considering reaching out to an old friend to go ahead. “I say just do it. You have nothing to lose,” she said. “I guess the worst they could do is not respond to you, but I feel like you’ll still be happy with the thought, ‘I tried.’ ”

Andrew Snyder’s best friend since fifth grade lives a plane ride away, but that hasn’t stopped them from keeping in touch. They call or email each other at least once a month and see each other several times per year.

At key points in their lives, they’ve visited each others’ homes “so when we talk about things, we actually can understand,” said Snyder, 50, who teaches philosophy and economics in New York City.

Living in different cities means it requires work to stay connected, but it’s important to Snyder, who feels that friendships are thinning out as people spend more time looking at cellphone screens.

“Friendship and cooking your own food, and exercising and being outside, these are the things that used to be real life, and now I think they’re all fading,” Snyder said. “I don’t think the real issue is time anymore. I think the real issue is a sense of overwhelm and a sense of depletion that we all feel.”

Kim Ventresca, 22, drifted from her best friend while attending college. She reached out a few times, and they reconnected when the friend was having a rough time. But they stopped talking again when Ventresca was going through mental health and relationship challenges. Eventually, the other young woman told Ventresca she no longer wanted to be friends.

“I’ve got some new friends now, and I feel like it’s probably better because some things happen for a reason,” she said. “I’m hoping that she’s alright and that she is doing OK.”

Ventresca, who works as a social media manager and receptionist in New Jersey, said she still recommends reaching out to missed friends, even if it’s awkward.

“The worst thing that happens is you get ‘left on read’ or delivered or declined,” she said.

After Austin’s family moved to Germany, she didn’t see her childhood best friend again for 20 years, through a chance meeting on a New York City subway platform. They reconnected briefly, but contact lapsed again.

Molly’s 2021 visit with one of her children to a college near Austin’s home provided another chance to restore the friendship. They’ve remained close since.

“Something at that point just shifted,” Austin, owner of KindPoint Communications, said. “Things really picked up, and we just basically outright said, ‘Let’s just keep this momentum going. Let’s not wait another 20 years.’ ”

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THE KID WHISPERER

Avoid pupil power struggles by being uncool yet effective

By Scott Ervin
Tribune News Service

Dear Kid Whisperer: I'm reading your book and having a hard time with how this works for seventh graders.

If I use Strategic Noticing as many times as you suggest, 34 times in one of my 50-minute periods, I think it will actually annoy the kids, and they'll turn it into a joke. Do you have any thoughts on seventh graders?

Dear Reader: No.

Not really.

Let me explain.

As teachers, we want kids to do lots of stuff. We may want them to sit down, be quiet, work, carry the "1," cross the "t," show their work, solve for "x," line up, keep their eyes on their own paper, on and on, ad infinitum.

So, traditionally, we educators will do what makes sense: We just tell kids what to do.

"Sit down."

"Be quiet."

"Carry the 1."

Kids in Non-Behavioral Leadership schools are often told what to do hundreds of times a day.

Not only is it annoying for them and for you, but it also systematically reinforces all of the behaviors you don't want to see.

Have you noticed that kids love attention and love having a feeling of control over you?

Did you ever notice that the 20% of your students who take 80% of your time don't care what kind of attention and control they get (positive or negative)?

So, when we tell students what to do when they are not yet doing what they are supposed to be doing, we reinforce them doing the things we don't want them to do!

Kids in Non-Behavioral Leadership schools are often told what to do hundreds of times a day. **DREAMSTIME**

This is a problem, no?

So, instead, Behavioral Leadership educators do this completely bizarre thing that is uncomfortable and weird but also may be the most important behavior-management strategy ever devised for schools.

We give attention and, thereby, a healthy feeling of control to kids right when they do the things we want them to do.

Kid Whisperer: I noticed Kid No. 3 is seated.

Kid Whisperer: I noticed Kid No. 24 is silently working.

Kid Whisperer: I noticed Kid No. 10 carried the "1."

Part of the beauty of this is that when kids overhear other kids getting attention and thereby control over the adult when they are doing something right, they usually start doing the right thing without ever being told to do the right thing.

This noticing should be done, at an absolute minimum, every 90 seconds.

Wait, what?

Yes. Every 90 seconds.

I know what you are thinking: "When am I going to have time to teach if I notice every 90 seconds?"

To that question, I have a question of my own: How often do you tell kids what to do?

I bet it's more than every 90 seconds. What if you didn't have to do that anymore?

So, to answer your question about seventh graders — you are worried about your seventh grade students being annoyed.

In all of my years doing this, I've never seen a teacher of any age kid use Strategic Noticing for a few days with fidelity whereby they had students still being disruptive about Strategic Noticing.

Plus, if you are making constant demands, they are already annoyed. Strategic Noticing will be far less annoying than being told what to do over and over.

Will the kids mock it and laugh about it at first? Of course. They're middle schoolers. They think anything that isn't on TikTok with more than a million views should be mocked.

Will they think you are uncool if you use Strategic Noticing? Of course. They are 13. They already think you're uncool because you are older than 18. You might as well be highly effective while they think you're uncool.

If you stick to this, you can avoid getting caught in power struggles. You can avoid your students feeling bossed around.

Strategic Noticing will make kids more cooperative while making you feel more and more positive by refocusing you on the positive things happening in your classroom.

Behavioral consultant Scott Ervin, M.Ed, is a parent and former teacher and principal. He is the author of "The Classroom Behavior Manual: How to Build Relationships, Share Control, and Teach Positive Behaviors."

Friend without kids grapples with feeling like odd one out

Judith Martin
Miss Manners

Dear Miss Manners: I am in my late 30s and childless, not by choice. I prefer to have a small circle of friends, but I have found it difficult to find other childless friends; statistically, most people my age have children — especially in church settings, where I spend a lot of my time.

It often leaves me feeling like I don't fit in, as I cannot relate to the conversations revolving around pregnancy and childrearing.

One close friend, who is aware of how I feel, and with whom I converse nearly every day, often shares stories with me that I cannot relate to. I often find it hard to cope with this, as they bring up a lot of grief and feelings of being the odd one out. She just shared her excitement over a conversation she had with two other friends (whom I do not know) about the similarities in how they raised their now-adult children and some of the relational results of their various parenting choices.

I don't want to squash my friend's excitement, nor do I want to discourage her from sharing the things that are important to her; however, I find her lack of tact related to subject choice to be unintentionally hurtful.

How do I politely tell her that I care about what is important to her, but that I feel hurt and unseen when she talks about how she relates to other mothers, or goes into detail about how she parented? I don't want to discount her very important work of being a mother, but I also don't want to suffer in silence.

Gentle reader: Certainly, it is inconsiderate to talk incessantly about something your conversational partner is sensitive toward or has not experienced. But it is also difficult to confine oneself only to subject matter that is shared. So while Miss Manners has sympathy, she also warns you not to fall into the habit of only seeking out likeminded companionship.

She also notices that the example you use of your friend's insensitivity is not as damning as you seem to think. Your friend was not speaking about current parenting experiences, but of the results of past parenting. Surely, as a child of parents yourself, you can relate. But if you still need to emphasize the difference, you could always preface it by saying, "Well, I can't speak to it from the parenting end, but as a child of the authoritative parenting method, I can tell you that ..."

In any case, it would be a shame if you cut yourself off from others' human experiences because you have been deprived of some of your own. Rather than suffer in silence, see if you can find deeper connections. You may be surprised by the rewards.

Dear Miss Manners: I was hospitalized for 17 days due to complications from a cancer-related surgery. During that time, my sister drove 80 miles a day to see me. She was very kind and patient.

Since then, I have recovered, and I now live in an assisted living facility. My sister has become overbearing: lecturing me on what I eat, how I keep my room, how I take care of my diabetes, on and on. I've told her that it makes me feel bad, but nothing has changed. Finally, I told her that my only problem was her picking on me.

I have to see her because she brings my medications; otherwise, I would go no-contact. Any advice on how to handle this would be greatly appreciated.

Gentle reader: You do know, don't you, that your sister is consumed with worry about you and is frantic to help? Not that her nagging helps. Miss Manners understands how exasperating it is. But to expel your sister from your life would be a cruel response to her concern for you, and the useful services she renders you.

Asking frankly that she stop nagging hasn't helped, either, although it might have if you had asked more gently. We will have to try a sneakier method, but it depends on your not reacting to provocation. Can you manage that?

She says, "You shouldn't be eating that," and you say, "You're so nice to come out in this weather." She says, "This room is a mess," and you say, "Did you have trouble parking?"

Or you just close your eyes, wait a beat or two, and then say, "Oops, I must have dozed off."

Of course, your sister may report to the staff that you seem to be wandering mentally. So you might take the precaution of mentioning to the staff, gently and amusedly, that your sister is afraid you are not paying sufficient attention to her affectionate nagging.

To send a question to the Miss Manners team of Judith Martin, Nicholas Ivor Martin and Jacobina Martin, go to missmanners.com or write them c/o Universal Uclick, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, MO 64106.

MY PET WORLD

Lean into routine to help anxious dog, restless cats

By Cathy M. Rosenthal
Tribune Content Agency

Dear Cathy: My 3-year-old rescue beagle, Millie, howls every time I leave the house, even if it's just to take out the trash. My neighbors say she cries the entire time I'm gone from the house. I've tried leaving the TV or radio on, but nothing seems to help. How can I get her to feel calmer when I'm not home?

— Janet, Patchogue, New York

Dear Janet: It sounds like Millie has developed some separation anxiety, which is common in rescue dogs who have experienced change or loss. There are several things you can do to help her feel more secure when you leave.

Start by making departures and arrivals very calm; no big goodbyes or excited greetings. That helps teach Millie that your coming and going is no big deal. You can also try leaving her with a stuffed Kong or puzzle toy with hidden treats, so she associates your absence with something positive. Gradually build her confidence by practicing short separations. Step outside for a few seconds, then return before she starts to howl, and slowly increase the time away. This teaches her that you always come back.

Anxiety wraps can help some dogs feel more secure, as can over-the-counter calming chews or pheromone diffusers. If those don't help enough, ask your veterinarian about prescription anti-anxiety medication or short-term options to help her during training. With patience and consistency, Millie can learn that being alone isn't scary.

Dear Cathy: I recently adopted two cats I had fostered more than two years ago. One, a male, cries at night when I close my bedroom door, and the female paws at it. I prefer they not sleep in my room or on my bed, but their nightly protests are keeping me awake. Any advice for helping them settle down?

Also, I've read that cats can get dehydrated and should have multiple water stations. Do you recommend automatic fountains?

— Heidi M.

Dear Heidi: Congrats on being a new cat mom. Yes, cats often don't drink enough water, so multiple water stations are a great idea. Some love fountains, others don't, so you will have to see what your cats prefer. Keep their water in a separate spot from their food. Many cats won't drink when it's located next to their meals.

As for the nighttime antics, cats naturally follow a rhythm of play, eat, groom, sleep. Try giving them a good play session before bed, something that lets them chase and pounce, like a wand or laser toy. Then, feed them right afterward. They'll usually groom themselves and settle in for a nap.

Cats are naturally nocturnal, so it goes against their body clock to stay asleep all night. If you can afford it, I recommend buying a timed laser light and timed feeder that works with their microchip or tag. Set up the laser toy to go off at a certain time in the wee hours of the morning, which will engage their play routine again (while you remain fast asleep), and then time it so their feeder opens after that, prompting the same play, eat, groom, sleep routine. You can also introduce them to a puzzle toy that has treats in it that will keep them entertained — as long as you don't think they will fight over the food resources.

Dear Cathy: To the woman whose dog is frightened by the motorcycle rally, I would advise her to check with the police about ending that. She and her neighbors are entitled legally to a peaceful home environment.

— Beth Long, Muttontown, New York

Dear Beth: You're right; I didn't think to mention calling the police. Several readers echoed your suggestion, noting that repeated noise complaints from neighbors might encourage law enforcement to increase their presence and discourage late-night racing or rallies.

Follow-up question

Meg in Papillon, Nebraska, followed up about her cat scratching the furniture. I advised her to stop clapping or shouting when trying to distract the cat, as that can increase a cat's stress. She asked what she should replace it with.

Instead, use a calm interrupter word, like "Hey" or "Ah-ah," or toss a soft toy to redirect her, or call her over and reward her with praise or a treat. This creates a new pattern, "hear you, come to you, get rewarded," instead of, "hear noise, get scared and hide from it."

Thanks for the follow-up.

Cathy M. Rosenthal is an animal advocate, author, columnist and pet expert. Send your pet questions, stories and tips to cathy@petpundit.com. Please include your name, city and state. You can follow her @cathymrosenthal.

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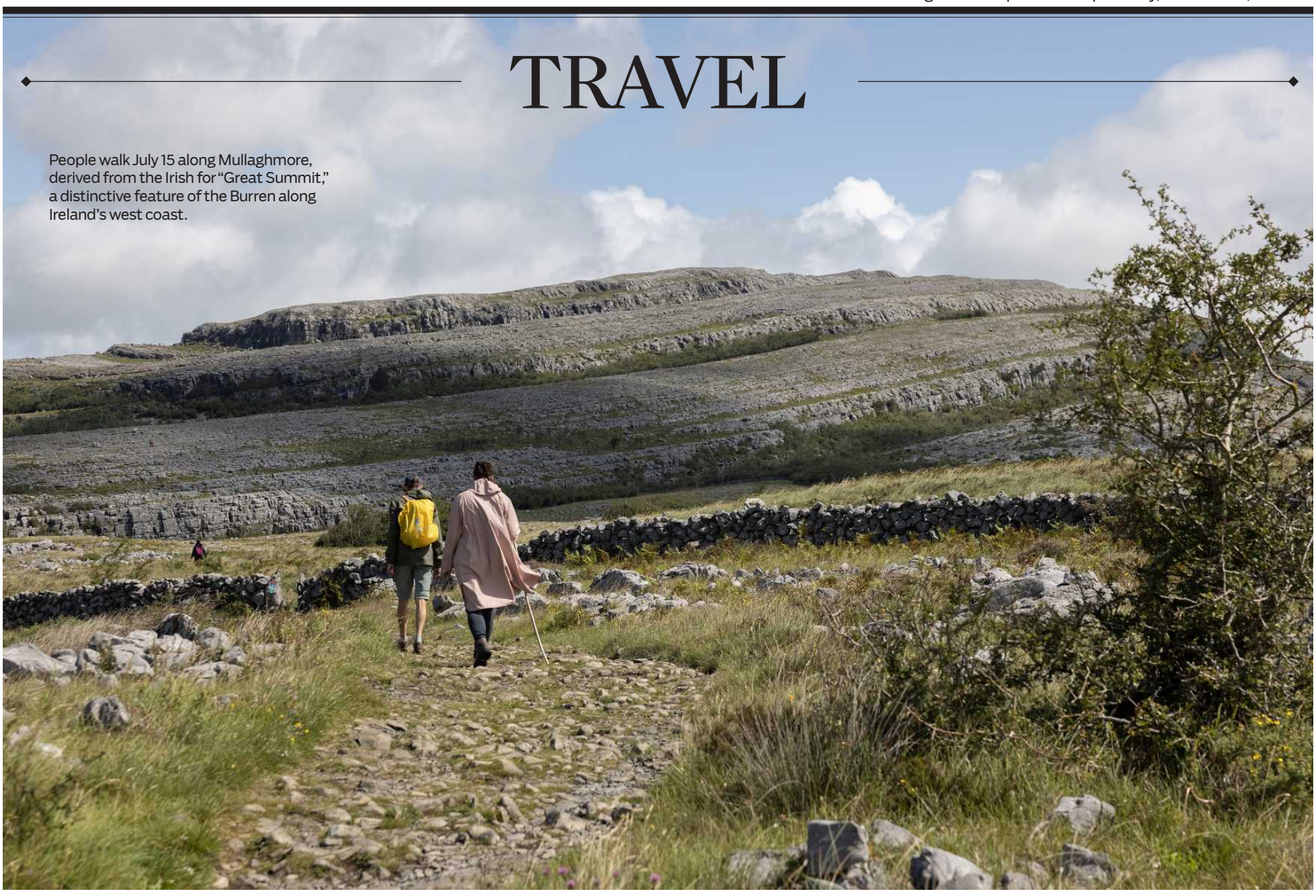
The people in your corner.

TRAVEL



People walk July 15 along Mullaghmore, derived from the Irish for "Great Summit," a distinctive feature of the Burren along Ireland's west coast.

Creative mystique

Wandering rocks and valleys of the Burren in west Ireland sparks guests' imaginations

Painter Richard Hearns works July 14 in his studio in the Burren in Ireland's County Clare. The Burren can be fertile ground for creativity.

By Warren Berger | The New York Times

The first time I walked alone in the Burren, a vast region on the west coast of Ireland, I got lost. Coming up a mountain path, I somehow wandered onto a desolate ledge, where I found myself in a standoff with a pack of wild Irish goats. The shaggy beasts didn't seem inclined to make room for me, so I reversed course, which led me into a valley where I came upon a 2,000-year-old stone fort (ancient forts and tombs abound in the Burren). I then climbed back up a different path, ascending to a breathtaking view of the Atlantic Ocean.

For hours, I was the only human around. And there was no sound other than my footsteps on flat limestone rock that glowed in the sunshine. Free of distraction, my mind raced with thoughts about a book idea forming in my head. I lost track of time and walked for six hours, leaving me simultaneously exhausted and exhilarated.

This is the essence of the Burren: It's a place to wander, both physically and mentally, to get lost in your thoughts and then be periodically snapped to attention by real-life wonders.

If you're not familiar with the Burren (the name derives from the Gaelic for "stony place"), you're not alone. Even among the Irish, many have only a passing familiarity with it — meaning, they tend to pass by it on their way somewhere else. Extending from just north of the Cliffs of Moher to Galway Bay in northwest County Clare, the Burren features scenic mountains, lovely beaches, grassland valleys and, around its perimeter, several small but lively towns. At its center is a 6-square-mile national park.

But what it's most known for is limestone. Long ago, this area was an enclosed tropical sea. As the water receded, a rugged limestone landscape composed largely of compressed seashells was slowly revealed. The stone, which is highly reflective, changes hue constantly, and can take the form of huge "erratic" boulders or flat, smooth slabs divided by crisscrossing crevices; walking on those slabs is like striding atop a limestone jigsaw puzzle.

Sprouting from the crevices between the rocks are some of the world's rarest flowers: vivid blue spring gentians, bee orchids and more. The abundant plant life is nourished by hidden rivers flowing beneath the rocky surface, with the cracks serving as greenhouses. Irish novelist Niall Williams said that at first glance, the Burren "seems an unforgiving landscape, but then you become aware of the extraordinarily tender plants surviving in the crevices — there's a kind of magic to it."

Through the years, Irish poets such as William Butler Yeats and Seamus Heaney have waxed lyrical about the Burren. Priest-turned-bestselling-author John O'Donohue — born and buried in the area — wrote and spoke extensively about its inspirational qualities. O'Donohue told one interviewer that this rocky canvas "was always waiting for me like a huge invitation to extend your imagination."

In recent times, that invitation has been accepted by artists from around the world. Abstract painter Richard Hearns, documentary filmmaker Katrina Costello and singer-songwriter Luka Bloom told me that soon after visiting and spending time in the Burren, they decided to live and work there. Creativity is in the air, though people insist it's also in the rock.

My own interest in the Burren as a creative haven was stirred by a local pub owner. A few years ago, as my wife and I were driving from the Cliffs of Moher, we stopped at Curtin's Roadside Tavern in the Burren town of Lisdoonvarna. The proprietor, Peter Curtin, told us that the Burren had inspired well-known authors, including J.R.R. Tolkien (some dispute this, but Tolkien did spend time in the area — and there are striking similarities between his Middle Earth and the Burren's misty mountains and underground caves).

I decided to do my own deep dive into the Burren's creative mystique, spending a week there last year. I came away from that brief stay with a fully formed idea and a half-written proposal for a book about how exposure to certain natural settings like the Burren can fuel creativity.

There may be a scientific basis for why places like the Burren seem to inspire creativity. Marc Berman, a psychologist who runs the University of Chicago's Environmental Neuroscience Lab, has studied the effects of natural environments on cognitive performance. He has found that when people spend time in natural settings — particularly places with wide-open vistas, a sense of remoteness and an absorbing yet calming beauty — the creative part of the brain relaxes and is restored, which can trigger the surfacing of insights and ideas.

With my half-dozen substantial walks in the Burren during my recent stay, I found that the longer I walked, the more deeply I thought and the more I was jotting down ideas in my notepad. I then took my notes back to Hanne's Cottage, a traditional Irish home where Hanne Fisker, a photographer, rents out two rooms to visitors, to write them up for my online journal. With my walking and writing done, I replenished myself at Burren eateries such as Monks in Ballyvaughan, which serves a hearty Guinness beef stew; the 300-year-old Linnane's Lobster Bar in New Quay, where I devoured (with help) a head-to-tail John Dory fish swimming in butter; and the aforementioned Roadside Tavern, famous for its smoked salmon from the nearby Burren Smokehouse.

I usually finished my evenings in the Burren's traditional music hub town of Doolin, where veteran flute and whistle player Christy Barry hosts visitors in his home, the Doolin Music House; various other "trad" legends can be heard at Gus O'Connor's Pub.

If you're considering taking your own creative sojourn in the Burren, a few pointers: Hike the dune trails of Fanore Beach and the paths leading up Mullaghmore, the Burren's "sacred mountain." Stroll the walkway that runs along the windblown Flaggy Shore. If you desire an artful guide, poet David Whyte conducts annual weeklong tours, as does the John O'Donohue Legacy Partnership. More affordable, multihour tours are offered by author Tony Kirby; or you can take a morning walk, as I did, with author and artist Gordon D'Arcy, an expert on the Burren's flowers, its native birds and its marvelously built stone walls.

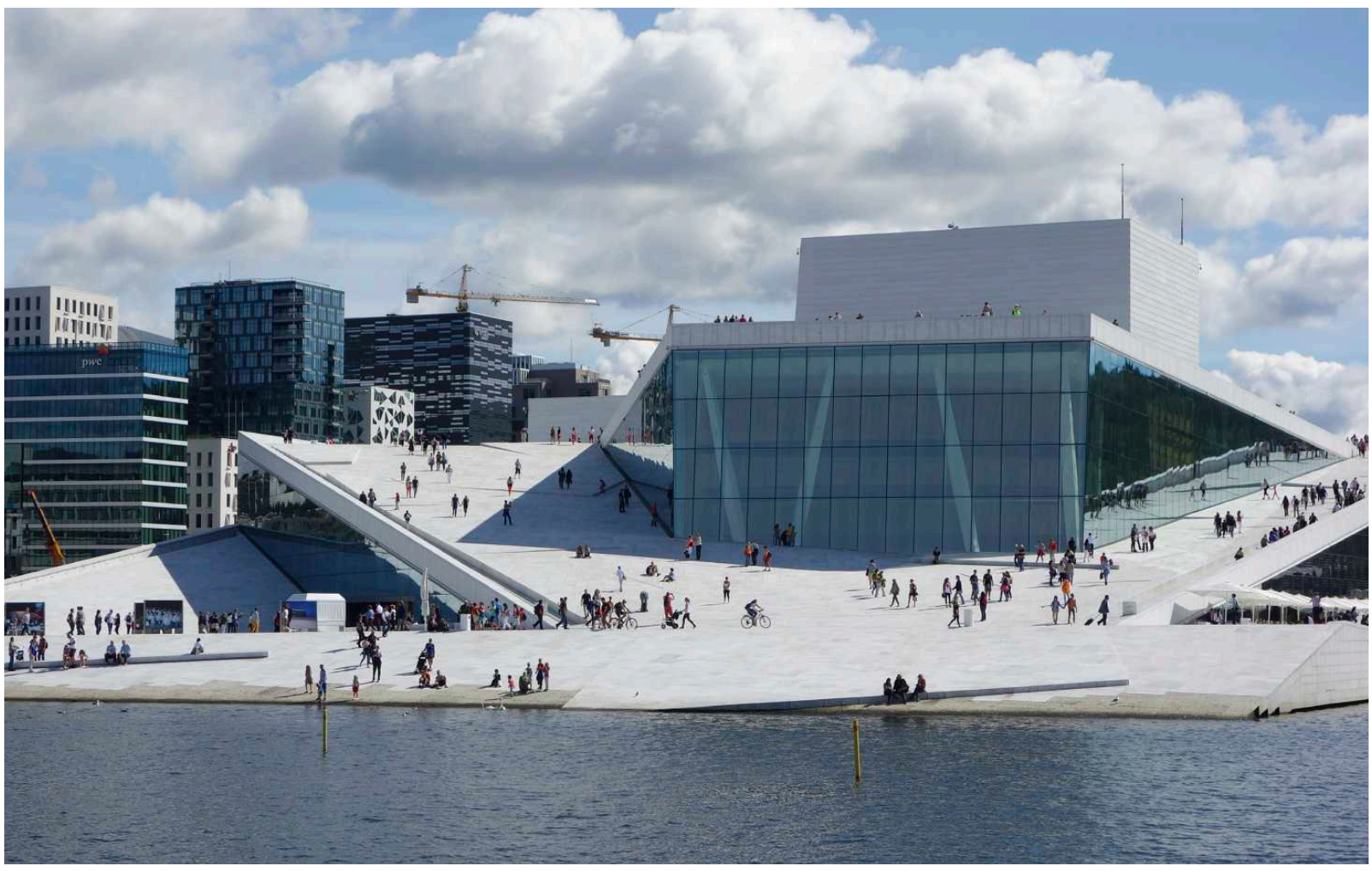
One last tip: Leave behind the headphones. Just listen for the silence, the occasional faint cuckoo call, and most important, your own creative voice.

Above: Featuring upright stones and a flat roof, this ancient "wedge" tomb, seen July 9, is one of about 80 around the Burren. You can walk for hours among the rocks and valleys with only your thoughts for company.

Left: Traditional Irish music in the town of Doolin in the Burren, County Clare, Ireland, on July 14. **KAREN COX/ THE NEW YORK TIMES PHOTOS**

Norway's capital filled with texture

Rick Steves



Rising like an iceberg from the sea, Oslo's Opera House is one of many ways the city has revitalized its waterfront. **RICK STEVES**

A big statue of a tiger sits in front of the train station of Norway's capital, Oslo. A local once explained that Oslo is nicknamed "Tiger City" because, in the 19th century, when country boys would visit this wild and crazy "New York City of Norway," it would "make a mark on their soul."

I find Oslo more of a kitten than a tiger. Its mix of grand Neoclassical facades, boxy '60s-style modernism, pastoral parks and homogenous culture have always felt a bit tame for my taste. But dig deeper, and you'll find more texture here — from wild new buildings on its people-friendly harborfront to troubled artists.

The city's grand boulevard, Karl Johans gate, cuts from the train station through the center of town to the Royal Palace. It's lined with restaurants, parks, and landmarks — including Oslo Cathedral, Parliament and Stortorvet Square, with its lively flower and produce market.

A boulevard highlight is the venerable Grand Café, once the meeting place of Oslo's intellectual and creative elite. At the back of the café, a mural shows Norway's literary and artistic clientele enjoying this fine hangout, from playwright Henrik Ibsen (who came in every afternoon) to Edvard Munch, Norway's most famous and influential painter.

Munch's work is featured on Oslo's waterfront, in the new Munch museum — the biggest art museum in Europe dedicated to a single artist. Munch helped to pioneer a new style, Expressionism, using lurid colors and bold lines to "express" inner turmoil and the angst of the modern world. His most iconic painting is The Scream, which he described as "the work of a madman."

The Munch building is one example of Oslo's efforts to make its fjord more people-friendly. In the past, you would have dodged several lanes of traffic to get here — but now, most traffic has been diverted through tunnels. As in many European cities, residents are reclaiming their waterfront.

Next door to Munch is the marble Opera House, which seems to rise like an iceberg from the sea. This is the only opera house in the world that doubles as a public plaza, with a roof designed to be a theater itself — where locals gather to enjoy the sun, fjord views and concerts. Opened in 2008, this creative cultural venue is a huge hit. I once joined 8,000 others on the rooftop to watch a fast-rising pop band perform on ... the water. (Their stage was a raft anchored just offshore.)

Farther west along the harbor stands Oslo's striking City Hall, famous for hosting the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony. Completed in 1950 to celebrate the city's 900th birthday, the building was an avant-garde thrill in its day. Entering here, I'm reminded that in this most highly taxed corner of Europe, city halls (rather than churches) are the dominant buildings. While the state religion is Lutheran, people rarely go to church. Instead, they seem to almost worship good government ... In fact, the main hall actually feels like a temple.

Walking — or cycling — along Oslo's harbor is a great way to enjoy the city's fjord-side setting and re-envisioned harborfront. A series of information kiosks creates an inspiring DIY tour route, celebrating how Oslo turned an industrial wasteland into a thriving, green and welcoming residential district.

The fjord itself is another top attraction. There are plenty of expensive private cruise options, but the best deal is just to hop on a ferry. These public boats do a roughly hour-long loop of the Oslo fjord, and you can decide whether you want to stay on for the whole thing (this works great with a picnic lunch), or hop off to explore any of Oslo's five islands. If you're short on time, Hovedøya, featuring the ruins of a 12th-century Cistercian Abbey, is the most worthwhile. Rides are just $4 (free with the Oslo City Pass), and depart from in front of City Hall.

Once you've docked back in Oslo proper, head to Frogner Park — a short tram ride away. This not only offers a peek at locals at play, but also features a fine sculpture garden showcasing a lifetime of work by Norway's greatest sculptor, Gustav Vigeland.

From 1924 to 1943, Vigeland created a world of bronze and granite statues — around 600 nude figures in all. The centerpiece is a monolith of life, with 121 figures carved out of a single block of stone rocketing skyward. Vigeland left his beloved city a park filled with stony and thought-provoking insights into the bittersweet cycle of life.

Norwegians don't get much summer, so they practically live outdoors when the weather turns nice. And, from its new people-friendly waterfront to spacious Frogner Park, Oslo has made it easy for locals and travelers alike to enjoy a delightful urban mix of the city's unique story and outdoor spaces.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

Winter draws on music of Bulgaria

By Jae-Ha Kim
Tribune Content Agency

Pieces on Paul Winter's album "Horn of Plenty" were inspired by his experiences in Brazil, Ireland and Russia. **BILL ELLZEY**

Six-time Grammy-winning saxophonist Paul Winter is back with his latest album, "Horn of Plenty."

"It is the literal meaning of cornucopia, the traditional Thanksgiving symbol of abundance," the musician said. "I have always referred to my soprano sax as a horn, and I've aspired to produce a voice on saxophone that is similar to that of a French horn."

Winter, 86, resides in northwest Connecticut.

This interview with Winter has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: Did any of your travels inspire "Horn of Plenty"?
A: Pieces on the album have been inspired by my experiences in Brazil, Ireland, Russia and Bulgaria, as well as the ocean and the Grand Canyon.

Of the 13 tracks on the album,"Harvest Faire" was inspired by my years of listening to Bulgarian music and my love of the unique rhythms of Balkan cultures. "Primavera (Spring)" traces its origins to my jazz sextet's 1962 tour of Latin America, when I met the song's composer, Carlos Lyra. Many years later, I was blessed to have the opportunity to record "Primavera" with the great Brazilian guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves.

And there are reinterpretations of several iconic chestnuts from my musical journey, including Ralph Towner's composition, "Icarus," which has been (my group) the Consort's theme song for over 50 years.

Q: Do you have any upcoming trips planned?
A: I'm looking forward to returning to Brazil, Japan and also California.

Q: What are your hopes for the upcoming year?
A: My perennial wish is that more and more people, especially of the younger generations, will return to the world of nature.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?
A: Brazil. I love the music, beaches, climate and people.

Q: What was a trip you took as a child that stands out?
A: When I was perhaps 5 years old, our family drove to Niagara Falls. The Falls were pretty scary to me, but very exciting.

Q: What's the most important thing you've learned from your travels?
A: My ongoing experience from a lifetime of travels to all 50 of our states and to 52 countries of the world is that we are all part of a great family of life.

Q: If you could only pick one place to eat, would you prefer a food truck or fine dining?
A: I'd prefer a vegan food truck, so I could then sit outside and eat.

Q: Where are your favorite weekend getaways?
A: The woods near our home.

Q: If you've ever gone away for the holidays, which was the best trip?
A: Since 1980, the Consort and I have had the great privilege of being artists-in-residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. For 40 years, we presented our Winter Solstice Celebrations there, with many guest artists from around the world and the world's largest gong to represent the return of the sun. Those celebrations were always the best trip! Also, for the past 45 years I've played at the Cathedral on Christmas Eve.

Q: Do you have a knack for picking up new languages?
A: I don't. I've been to Brazil many times, but I still speak Portuguese like Tarzan.

Q: When you go away, what are some of your must-have items?
A: Noise-canceling headphones for plane trips.

Q: What kind of research do you do before you go away on a trip?
A: I learn as much as possible about the geography of the region, so I have a mental map and don't have to rely on GPS.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Turo claims renter damaged car covered in mud at pickup

By Christopher Elliott | King Features Syndicate

I rented a car through Turo in Edmonton, Canada, and returned it in the same condition, but the host accused me of causing a scratch. The car was covered in mud when I picked it up, making it impossible to inspect for existing damage. At drop-off, it was dark and snowy, and my phone was dying, so my photos were too dim to prove anything.

The host admitted that the damage could've happened after I left the car in an unsecured parking spot. He refused to meet in person to discuss the alleged damage. He rented the car out again immediately, and Turo backed his $1,200 claim despite mechanics saying that the scratch was minor.

Turo ignored my evidence and raised the charge by $400 for "hidden damage" that was found after other renters used the car. As a student living on less than $2,000 a month, this fee is devastating. Did I just become a victim of a Turo scam?

— Bartosz Jusypenko, Olszanica, Poland

A: Turo, which is like Airbnb for cars, should have ensured that the host followed its own policy requiring vehicles to be clean at pickup. A dirty car prevented you from documenting pre-existing damage, violating the company's terms. (Turo's guidelines state that hosts must "clean the vehicle before each trip.")

Alberta's Consumer Protection Act also requires businesses to act in good faith, which Turo ignored by rubber-stamping blurry photos and refusing to address your evidence.

But you made a few mistakes, too. First, you shouldn't have accepted a muddy car. If you had no choice, you should have spoken with your Turo host about the difficulty of documenting any preexisting damage. (For me, knowing what I know about damage claims, I would have been highly reluctant to accept anything other than a written waiver from the host.)

You should have taken better photos at drop-off. But the host's refusal to allow an inspection — and Turo's failure to mandate one — tilted the process unfairly. Always keep a detailed paper trail, as you did, and escalate to executives if a company stonewalls you. I've published Turo's contacts on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org.

Before I get to the resolution of this case, I wanted to note that I agree with Turo and the host on one issue. If a renter damages a car while they have it — even if it's not their fault — they are responsible. In other words, if someone scratched your car, and you didn't notice, it doesn't matter. You're still on the hook.

But the evidence in this case was as muddy as the side of your Turo car. The photos were inconclusive. Turo didn't follow its procedures, and neither did the car's owner. The company needed to take another look at your case.

I contacted Turo on your behalf. The company admitted that the host's photos were "unclear" and voided the claim. "We remind all hosts and guests of the importance of clear trip photos," a representative told me.

Moral of the story? Never let a company pressure you into paying for damage that was not visible at the time of pickup — and always snap those pre-trip photos, even if it means borrowing a flashlight.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

Rescued gay sheep 'wool survive'

Fashion connects designer, farmer, Grindr, herd of rams

By Vanessa Friedman
The New York Times

Michael Stücke holds a sheep Nov. 4 in the infirmary on his farm in Löhne, Germany. Stücke, 52, is the co-founder of the nonprofit Rainbow Wool. **VALENTIN GOPPEL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES**

Michael Schmidt, the Chrome Hearts collaborator and rock 'n' roll couturier to divas like Cher, Shakira and Sabrina Carpenter, was shocked when he heard about the "gay sheep."

Or, to be fair, he was not shocked that some rams are considered gay, or "male-oriented," meaning that they decline to mate with ewes, a behavioral pattern seen in approximately 1 out of every 12 rams, and that scientists have studied for decades.

Rather, he was shocked to discover what happens to many such sheep that are part of large flocks on working farms — the kind of establishments where, said Scott Carmody, the head of domestic operations for Woolmark, the usual ratio is one ram per 50 ewes, and the job of the ram is procreation.

If the ram does not fulfill his duty, he is generally sent to the slaughterhouse. Essentially, "the sheep are killed for being gay," Schmidt said.

Schmidt thought that perhaps fashion could change the situation. So though he generally spends his days working with chain mail and Swarovski crystals, he has joined forces with Rainbow Wool, a German nonprofit created by a farmer in deep Westphalia who rescues the nonmating sheep and cultivates them for their wool, and Grindr, the LGBTQ dating app that bills itself as the "gayborhood of the world," to bring the story to life through a 37-piece knitwear collection.

Recently, the knits were showcased in the first Rainbow Wool fashion show titled "I Wool Survive" — though calling it a "show" is, Schmidt said, a misnomer.

"It's an animal rights story," he said. "And it's a human rights story."

According to Tristan Pineiro, the senior vice president for brand marketing and communications at Grindr, it is also "a metaphor for how gay people are treated across the world.

"The gay sheep get discarded, get forgotten, are seen as not valuable," Pineiro said. "But through them, two people who would never otherwise have met, a German sheep farmer and a Los Angeles designer, got connected and together created something beautiful."

At a time when business in general has backed away from potentially controversial topics, the Grindr x Rainbow Wool fashion show is an anomaly. But that, Schmidt said, is exactly why it was important. Especially because it centers on an issue — cute and cuddly sheep — that people on any side of the political spectrum can embrace.

"I don't view this really as fashion," Schmidt said. "I view it as an art project. It's selling an idea more than a collection of clothing, and the idea it's selling is that homosexuality is not only part of the human condition, but of the animal world. That puts the lie to this concept that being gay is a choice. It's part of nature."

Pineiro put it more directly: "You can't say the sheep were corrupted by woke culture."

Saving the sheep

Michael Stücke, 52, the co-founder of Rainbow Wool, doesn't look like an activist. Shy and bespectacled, he spends most of his time in a forest green tracksuit that sort of matches his fields. He grew up on a farm that kept cows and pigs and was raised with certain expectations: He would take over the family farm, and he would get married and raise his own family to help him do it.

"There was a lot of pressure," he said. "The farming business in Germany is pretty conservative." He was speaking on his own farm, just over 100 acres of rolling green pastures and oak trees in Löhne, where he has more than 500 sheep, 35 of them rescued male-oriented rams, as well as his own carding machine to treat their wool and ready it to be shipped to the mill.

Stücke knew he was gay from a young age but didn't come out to his parents until he was 24. When he did, he ended up leaving the family farm and working in a paper mill. Eventually, an interest in environmentalism prompted him to start his own sheep farm. (Sheep can help maintain the health of the soil used to grow grains.) His adventures in sheep husbandry led him to discover the fate of the nonprocreating rams, and in 2021 a discussion with a friend, Nadia Leytes, led them to start Rainbow Wool.

"We were talking about being gay and what it means," said Leytes, who works in public relations with the Serviceplan ad agency group. "And I asked him if there were gay animals and if so, what happens to them?" Soon they were trying to come up with alternatives to the slaughterhouse.

Then Stücke had a revelation: The male sheep have one advantage the female sheep do not have.

"When female sheep get pregnant, they stop growing wool," Leytes said. "But the male sheep never stop." Their wool, she and Stücke thought, could be a business opportunity. Even if, in the beginning, the farming community saw their idea as "controversial," Stücke said, and made fun of them.

They began with three sheep. Now they have a spokesperson — Bill Kaulitz, the lead singer of the band Tokio Hotel and a popular German influencer — a network of slaughterhouses and farmers happy to sell their nonprocreating rams and a relationship with a Spanish mill that spins the wool into yarn.

They also have an e-tail store that sells patches and caps with the proceeds going to LGBTQ+ charities, as well as sheep sponsorships.

"It's a triple win," Leytes said. "The community wins, the sheep win, the farm wins."

What Rainbow Wool did not have until Grindr got involved, however, was global reach. That was why, in mid-2024, Leytes messaged Pineiro, telling him their story. (At that point, Stücke had never heard of Grindr.)

"I instantly thought this is something we need to be involved in," Pineiro said. Grindr enlisted Schmidt, who visited Stücke and his sheep this year.

The two men bonded over farm life — Schmidt also grew up in an agricultural family, albeit in the American Midwest — and being isolated as a young gay person. When Stücke talks about the visit, he tears up. He tends to get emotional when describing the support he has begun to experience after years of feeling ostracized.

Gladiators, gym teachers, pool boy

What exactly Schmidt decided to do with the wool — all 30 boxes of yarn that arrived from Germany — might have surprised Stücke.

"I really wanted to lean into the gay," Schmidt said.

Given carte blanche for the show, Schmidt had decided to focus on the most cliched gay archetypes: the pool boy, the gym teacher, the rock star. Every piece, including red, white and blue Speedo-style briefs, has been hand-knit by Schmidt and Suss Cousins (author of "Hollywood Knits") or, in the case of accessories like a gladiator's sword and a pizza boy's pizza, crocheted. If the Village People did their own version of "Magic Mike," this is what they might wear.

"It's a very good, strong wool," Schmidt said. "It has a nice, luxurious hand to it, and it feels good on the body."

At the very least, Schmidt is hoping that by getting the word out, farmers in different countries will be inspired to adopt Stücke's approach and rescue their own flocks that might otherwise be sent to a slaughterhouse.

"This is the time to stand up for human rights and animal rights," Schmidt said. "This is a really difficult period we're living through."

GADGETS

Brighten your holiday with lights

By Gregg Ellman
Tribune News Service

Enbrighten Eternity Landscape Lights. **ENBRIGHTEN**

A recent post by Enbrighten told people to say goodbye to their boring outdoor holiday lighting, and honestly, that couldn't be more true.

Enbrighten Modern Cafe LED Lights bring your space to life with a stunning array of colors and lighting modes, perfect for every holiday and celebration. Built for year-round use, they feature weather-resistant, IP65-rated cables and durable acrylic bulbs. With a simple do-it-yourself setup, you'll enjoy an easy, permanent installation that looks great all year.

The setup is based on where you want the lights. Once it's completed, the Enbrighten companion app is your best friend for lighting modes, colors, presets and dimming options. It walks you through connecting them to your home's existing 2.4GHz Wi-Fi network, and then the control is up to you.

The lights come with presets in the companion app for the most popular holidays and occasions: Christmas, the Fourth of July, Mardi Gras and more. If you don't see one to your liking, create your own custom setting in under a minute. There's no need to attach the lights to a pesky timer. The app, which controls everything, has an option to create scenes for the time and days you want the lights on. My personal choice is dusk to dawn, which eliminates the need to change the time as the seasons and daylight hours change.

You can choose from 24-foot ($129.99) or 48-foot ($199.99) strands, or really be the talk of the neighborhood and go all out by connecting up to 750 feet of lights.

Lighting up your landscape for any holiday theme or year-round outdoor lighting is even easier with the Enbrighten Eternity Landscape Lights. These Wi-Fi-enabled LED puck lights make it easy to illuminate your landscaping with fully customizable colors and lighting programs.

Each compact light is mounted on a small tripod stake for quick installation; just plug the string into an AC outlet, connect it to your home Wi-Fi, and you're ready to go. The lights are rated IP67 weatherproof for dependable, year-round performance. Available in 33-foot sets ($99.99), you can link multiple sets together with up to 150 feet total (36 lights) to cover larger areas with vibrant, programmable illumination.

Find the lights at enbrightenme.com.

iFi GO Blu Air

Whether you're commuting, traveling or just relaxing, the pocket-sized iFi GO Blu Air improves your portable audio performance anywhere life takes you. And one of the best features is how easy the setup is, which dramatically enhances your sound quality from your smartphone or tablet to your wired headphones.

With Bluetooth 5.2, pairing is fast and reliable with your smartphone, tablet or other portable music sources. Then plug in wired headphones and immerse yourself in stunning high-resolution audio. Weighing only 1.09 ounces and measuring 2.11 by 1.33 by 0.77 inches, the GO Blu Air fits easily in your pocket or clips securely to your belt or backpack with the detachable magnetic clip.

My first experience with a portable amp like the iFi GO Blu Air left me genuinely impressed. At first glance, you might think it sounds too good to be true or that it's complicated to use, but it's not. In fact, it's as simple as plug-and-play. I tested it with several different headphones, and each showed a noticeable improvement in sound quality, even with basic audio files from my iPhone playlist, delivering hi-fi-quality audio.

According to the GO Blu Air specs, it supports a comprehensive suite of high-resolution codecs, including LDAC, LHDC, aptX (Classic, HD, Adaptive), AAC, and SBC. Inside is a 450 mAh lithium-polymer rechargeable battery (USB-C), which will supply power for up to 10 hours of use.

A ChronoDial controls the volume and playback. Give the dial a long press and you'll access smartphone voice assistants. There are MEMS microphones with Qualcomm's noise and echo suppression, which work perfectly for clear handsfree calls.

Find it at ifi-audio.com for $129.

Are men's hats 'jaunty' or dumb?

Ellen Warren
Answer Angel

DREAMSTIME

Dear Answer Angel Ellen: Can you referee a dispute I'm having with my partner? He says men in what he calls "jaunty" hats look fashionable, noteworthy, interesting and well-dressed. I think that, depending on the hat, they look silly, self-important, foolish or just plain dumb.

What is your opinion?

— *Jen J.*

Dear Jen: The number of men's hat styles is mind-blowing: fedora, newsboy, beret, porkpie, cowboy, and, of course, baseball.

I'm not sure which among these fall into your partner's "jaunty" category. On the right person and the right occasion, some of these look good, or at least, interesting.

You asked my opinion and I agree with you that, while many of these styles are attention-getting, many are problematic. Clearly, you've let your partner know what you think. He disagrees. In the grand universe of things to argue about, this is small, but still (to you) very irritating. The issue cries out for compromise. Maybe you suggest he wear his choice of headwear when he is not with you? Strike a bargain and move on to larger issues.

Dear Answer Angel Ellen: In a recent column you addressed the reliability of "best-of" beauty products in magazines and online. Are these lists actually just advertising plugs with no credible (much less scientific) testing?

I recently read an article claiming the top beauty products. I can't help but wonder if they are only looking at products that have been sent to them by manufacturers looking for placement. How do we know what their selection process is? Do they really review every lip gloss or mascara in the market? They reference staffers' opinions, but what is their process for ranking the items they do review, assuming they even review multiple products?

— *Mary K.*

Dear Mary: Thank you for your well-placed skepticism. If the source of the "best" lists doesn't offer an explanation of how they research the products, their process is less than scientific and they might do the following.

- Give significant weight to products that supply free samples to the publication, blogger or website.
- Give advertisers special consideration.
- Take a poll of their staff's favorites.
- Make sure to mix in lower-priced products so they give options for those who won't pay $85 for a Hermes lipstick.

Dear Answer Angel Ellen: What is the right length now for men and women's pants?

— *Lilly D.*

Dear Mary Kay: It is more confusing than ever. I've seen "well-dressed" women in white pants that are literally dragging on the ground. I think this drag-on-the-floor women's fashion is growing in popularity but always ridiculous. Designer Tom Ford designs men's suits with pants so short — above the ankle — that they have a Pee-wee Herman vibe.

For ordinary men: A slight crease or "break" at the very top of the shoe is traditional for classic trousers. It's slightly shorter for jeans and casual pants: at the anklebone but not bunching at the ankle. For women, there is more variety: touching the top of or covering the anklebone, or a slight crease at the shoe or areas between the two.

Bottom line: Not touching the ground. This is particularly tough for women who wear various heel heights.

Angelic readers

Lucy T. writes: "I just read your response to BethAnn who was asking about reputable sources for information about products. You recommended checking Consumer Reports and said it requires a subscription in most cases. Before subscribing to Consumer Reports or New York Times (to read its wirecutter.com product reviews) she should check her local library's online resources. Many libraries have subscriptions to Consumer Reports, which are then available free if you have a library card. Some have New York Times subscriptions with access to wirecutter.com as well. Libraries are awesome!"

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Chicago Tribune
REAL ESTATE

Americans embrace naming their homes

Longtime European practice given modern, fanciful twist

House names have been practical, referring to the owner's occupation or referencing a characteristic that is helpful for postal deliveries in rural areas. **DREAMSTIME**

By Jennifer Bradley Franklin
The New York Times

Hambrick House may sound like a palatial estate in the English countryside. Instead, it's Caitlin Burke's 988-square-foot cottage in Dallas.

"I liked the idea of having some fun branding items for my house," Burke, 31, said. She created an alliterative moniker using her street name, and a logo that incorporated a poppy flower for her goldendoodle, Poppy. "It feels very much like a modern monogram," she added.

Burke, who works in marketing, is not alone in this growing domestic trend. Americans are giving their houses names, and they're not just grand homes on serious acreage — or listings on Airbnb or Vrbo — but rather normal, everyday abodes in the suburbs, cities or countryside.

Having something that is one-of-a-kind is alluring. Etsy reported a 199% increase in searches for "logo gifts," such as custom coasters, doormats and cutting boards that highlight someone's personal brand or logo, between July and September, compared with the same time last year.

According to Dayna Isom Johnson, a trend expert for Etsy, "Shoppers are increasingly prioritizing individuality," she said. "It all comes back to recognizing your personal story, your personal style and wanting to cement that within your home."

What's in a name?

Naming homes is nothing new. In Europe, well-to-do family properties often have names, such as the Sandringham estate, the British royal family's private property in Norfolk, England, or Villa Oleandra, the 18th-century villa in Lake Como, Italy, owned by George and Amal Clooney.

Historically, names have also been practical, to refer to the owner's occupation ("Tailor's Cottage") or to reference a physical characteristic that is helpful for postal deliveries in rural areas.

"Throughout Europe, the concept of naming a house predates street addresses," said Christina Butler, provost and professor of historic preservation at the American College of the Building Arts in Charleston, South Carolina. "A lot of these names told you something about who owned the land, how big the holding was and sometimes what their title was."

The modern stateside version is decidedly more fanciful.

When Audrey Chabaud, 36, bought her first home in Houston last year, the house needed a complete gut remodel, and her twin sister, Ashley, wanted to be involved. Ashley playfully started referring to it as "The Dollhouse," since she was having so much fun weighing in on design decisions.

The name stuck, and Ashley worked with Etsy seller Erin Regal, at a cost of $500, to create a logo featuring her sister's dog, Gidget.

Audrey Chabaud, a nurse, has since ordered golf club covers, doormats and stickers for packages of baked goods adorned with the home's logo. To her, the logo signifies how proud she feels of her home.

"I was one of the last people in my friend group to buy a house," she said. "People should be able to take pride in owning a home, whether it's a mansion or a 2,200-square-foot, 1969 ranch-style home."

For others, a house name reflects how they want to feel in the space. In 2017, Billy Leyhe, 50, bought a property in Long Beach, California. Inspired by the home's "laid-back vacation vibe" and an episode of "The

Turn to Names, Page 3

ELITE STREET

Former Fruit of the Loom CEO sells Chicago apartment for $7.5M

By Bob Goldsborough
For the Chicago Tribune

Financier and former Fruit of the Loom President and CEO William F. Farley and his wife, Shelley, on Nov. 19 sold their seven-bedroom apartment on the 14th floor of the cooperative building at 209 E. Lake Shore Drive for $7.5 million — less than half of the original asking price when the Farleys first listed the unit in 2023.

A self-made Rhode Island native who at one time co-owned the Chicago White Sox, Farley acquired Chicago conglomerate Northwest Industries, which had owned underwear maker Fruit of the Loom, in 1985 and took the firm public two years later. He was at the helm of Fruit of the Loom until 1999, when a reorganization concluded with its sale to Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway holding company. He now runs Liam Ventures, a private-equity firm.

In 1986, Farley bought one, 6,000-square-foot half-floor unit in the building. About six years later, he bought the other apartment, and he then hired noted Chicago architect Laurence Booth to combine them into a modernist-stye, 12,000-square-foot full-floor spread with 360-degree views.

In 2023, Farley told Elite Street

Turn to Elite, Page 3

Financier and former Fruit of the Loom President and CEO William F. Farley and his wife, Shelley, on Nov. 19 sold their seven-bedroom apartment on the 14th floor of the cooperative building at 209 E. Lake Shore Drive for $7.5 million. **JEFF LOWE**

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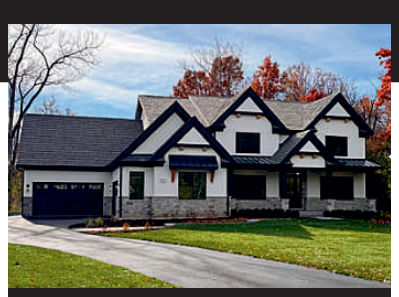
New Construction, Close to 2 Acres!

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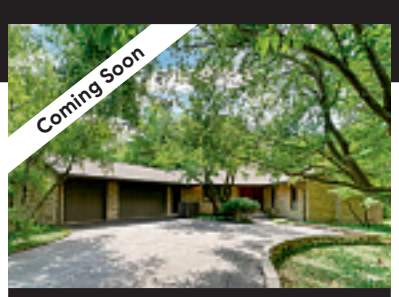
$2,899,000 | 5 Bed | 6 Bath | 7,565sqft



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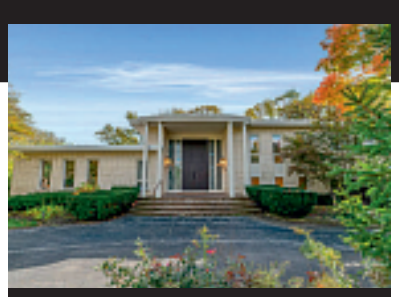
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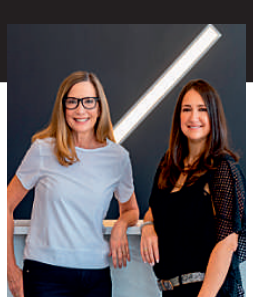

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ASK THE BUILDER

Overcome subway tile challenges

By Tim Carter
Tribune Content Agency

I have been installing stunning green subway tile in my son's new basement bathroom. Subway tile is rectangular in shape. The grout joints between each tile have the same back-and-forth staggered pattern as mortar joints between bricks in a wall. It's a fascinating look; the colors, textures and crackled glazing in some tile will take your breath away.

This bath is next to a speakeasy bar. The overall theme of the entire basement remodeling project is Art Deco. Subway tile is most often installed horizontally, just as you see most brick walls. My son likes to test my skill level, so he said "Dad, I want to install the subway tile vertically on the walls in the bathroom. I think it will be stunning."

He was right. This bathroom, once finished with the sleek wall-hung toilet and vanity with a copper sink, might qualify for a Better Homes & Gardens cover photo.

Subway tile poses a unique challenge. Each row needs to be in a straight line. High-quality tile makes this easy because the tile is created with small self-spacing edges. The tile will stay straight as long as the first row is straight, level or plumb, and you apply the perfect amount of adhesive to the walls. You don't want adhesive to ooze up in between adjacent tiles. This extra adhesive can alter the alignment.

There are two primary types of adhesive you use to set ceramic tile. One is an organic mastic that resembles cool cake icing. It spreads with relative ease using a notched trowel. Organic mastic is fine for wall installations where heavy objects will not subject the tile to concentrated pressure. The mastic retains a small amount of flexibility once it's cured.

Ceramic tile is weak in tension. This means that if you press on a tile and it flexes, it will crack. I discovered this decades ago when I used mastic to set tile on a restaurant kitchen floor. The tiles cracked when heavy equipment or table legs pressed down on the tile. I had to remove the broken tiles and replace all of them using thinset mortar. Thinset is nearly identical to brick mortar and hardens like rock with no flexibility.

Thinset mortar, in my opinion, is the best adhesive to use. It's waterproof. Thinset is a blend of fine silica sand and Portland cement. It can often contain polymers that enhance adhesion. It often contains a chemical retarder that slows down the chemical reaction that causes thinset to transform into rock. This retarder helps to extend the working time of the thinset. You need to press the tile into the wet thinset within several minutes of it being applied to the wall or floor. This ensures a great bond between the tile, the thinset and the substrate the tile is applied to.

Notched trowels are used to spread the mastic or thinset. You match the notch size to the tile size. The tile manufacturer often provides tables to help you get the right trowel. Glide the trowel over the substrate at a 45-degree tilt as you spread the mastic or thinset. This will allow you to apply the perfect amount of adhesive.

You'll have to cut tile to fit around electrical boxes and water pipes. Straight cuts can be created using an inexpensive tile snapper for most tile. The snapper has a carbide wheel that scratches the glazed surface. Once scored, the tile will snap along this line just like you cut glass.

Porcelain tile can only be cut with a wet or dry saw. You can't use a snapper and expect straight lines.

Wet saws or dry tile carbide blades are required to make L-shaped cuts. You can purchase a decent wet saw with a diamond blade for several hundred dollars. It might make sense for you to purchase a high-quality saw and sell it once you're done with your job. Pros are always looking for used wet saws in new condition.

You can cut circular holes in subway or other tile using inexpensive diamond hole saws. They come in many diameters. The tile needs to be clamped to a solid surface when making the cut. Use a slow drill speed to create the hole in the tile.

The shorter joint lines of subway tile installations are staggered, much like brick installations. **TIM CARTER**

Spend time thinking about the layout. Subway tile likes to be centered. You want to minimize, if possible, cutting thin pieces where the tile abuts an adjacent wall. Thin strips of tile must be cut on a wet or dry saw.

Grouting your subway tile is the easiest part of the job. Water is your biggest enemy. It's best to use wall grout for thin grout lines that are an eighth-inch or less in width. Wall grout doesn't contain sand. It should be the consistency of warm cake icing. Use a stiff rubber float to apply it.

A probate or estate attorney may be able to help navigate the process. **DREAMSTIME**

REAL ESTATE MATTERS

Declining inherited property involves 'disclaimer' of assets

By Ilyce Glink and Samuel J. Tamkin
Tribune Content Agency

Q: My uncle passed away and left a will. I am the executor for the estate. However, there is a second person named in the will who lives out of the country. The will states that all of the property is to be equally divided between that person and me. What documentation needs to be drafted or filed if that person wants to give me their share? Can they simply sign documents from the other country to use here to close on the real estate?

A: The first question we have is whether this other person is in agreement and truly does not want to receive any property from your uncle. If the other person named in the will does not want to receive anything from your uncle's estate, they might simply be able to provide you with the necessary documentation to file with the court in which they decline to accept the bequest.

When you decline an inheritance, it's called a "disclaimer" or "renunciation" of the assets. The process varies significantly by state. Most states require that you disclaim the inheritance within nine months of the decedent's death. Typically, you'll have to write out your name and relationship to the deceased, the description of the property being disclaimed, and make a statement that you're making an irrevocable disclaimer. Then, the document must be signed and, typically, notarized.

Before you get to that part, you'll need to file the will with the local probate court where your uncle lived. Once you file the will, you proceed with the probate process. The probate court recognizes the person named in the will as the executor and issues paperwork authorizing that person to act as the representative for the estate.

Once you are recognized as the executor, you have powers to deal with the property that your uncle owned.

You can close bank accounts, sell assets and do everything it takes to settle your uncle's estate including filing federal and state tax returns. One additional thing that you get to do is to sell your uncle's home and any other assets he owned.

As you sell your uncle's assets, and pay off any remaining debts to the estate, you eventually will distribute the cash you collect from these sales and distributions to the people named in the will. When you get to that stage, you would ordinarily send a check to the second person named in the will for half of the net proceeds from the estate and you would get the other half.

Having said that, if the other person simply does not want to receive any money from your uncle, the probate court likely has a form to file a disclaimer or renunciation of their share under the will. Your local probate court may have a different name for the process or form, but whatever that form is, they would have to fill it out and file it with the probate court. Make sure you have several copies, as you may need to provide a copy to various agents that hold the asset, like a bank or settlement company.

Given that the other person lives outside the United States, they would have to be careful in making sure they fill out the disclaimer form correctly. If the form needs to be notarized, they may need to go to the United States embassy or consulate. The executed original form may then need to be sent back to you for you to file with the probate court.

You may need the help of a probate or estate attorney to navigate the probate process. We're sure that person can guide you through the process of selling your uncle's home and any other personal property that your uncle owned.

Ilyce Glink is a financial journalist and book author, and Samuel J. Tamkin is a real estate attorney. Contact them through the website ThinkGlink.com.

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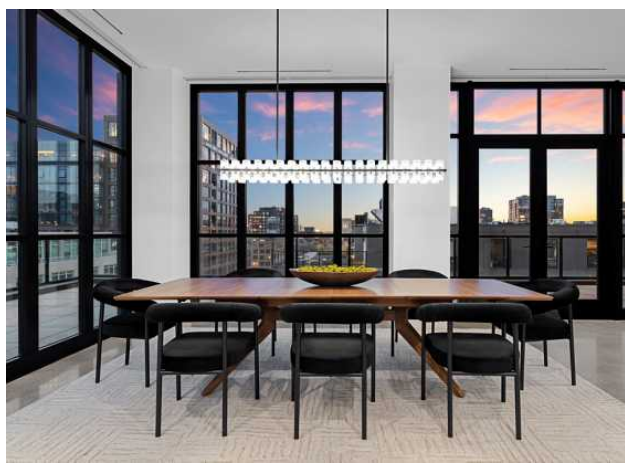

BRENT BORCHARDT PHOTOS

HOME OF THE WEEK

West Loop 5-bed duplex with private elevator: $4.1M

Address: 900 W. Washington Blvd., Unit PHW, Chicago
Price: $4,100,000
Listing agent: Laura England, Compass, 312-543-3178

This five-bedroom, five-bathroom, top-floor duplex offers skyline views from a wraparound terrace. A private elevator opens directly into the unit, which has radiant-heated concrete floors, designer lighting and floor-to-ceiling, sound-insulated windows. The kitchen has Scavolini cabinetry paired with Sub-Zero and Wolf appliances. All of the bedrooms have an en suite bathroom. The primary bedroom also has a custom walk-in closet. The unit is in a building that is LEED Gold-certified for environmental sustainability and has hospital-grade air filtration along with a 75% green roof. Two garage parking spaces are included.

Some listing photos are "virtually staged," meaning they have been digitally altered to represent different furnishing or decorating options. To feature your luxury listing of $1,000,000 or more in Chicago Tribune's Dream Homes, send listing information and high-res photos to ctc-realestate@chicagotribune.com.

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Elite

from Page 1

that he had hosted "probably three" U.S. presidents in the apartment over the years, along with numerous U.S. senators, governors and mayors. The 18-story building was constructed in the mid-1920s and designed by architect Benjamin Marshall, who himself lived in a sixth-floor apartment during the building's first decade or so.

The co-op has seven full bathrooms, two half bathrooms, six wood-burning fireplaces, a 1,200-square-foot primary bedroom suite with a sitting room, a custom-paneled library, an office, a wine cellar, a family/media room and a home gym. The deal includes two guest apartments located on lower levels of the building, as well as four garage spaces.

The couple first listed the co-op for $15.9 million in 2023, lowering it to $13.9 million later that year. Last year, the couple cut the price to $11.9 million, $9.9 million and $9.5 million, and then earlier this year, they reduced the apartment's asking price further, to $8.45 million and finally to $7.9 million.

Listing agent Jeffrey Lowe of Compass told Elite Street that Farley's now-former spread is "a wonderful apartment and we found a great buyer for it." He declined to identify the buyers, whom he did not represent. Public records do not yet identify the buyers.

"The Gold Coast is coming back," Lowe said. "It's just a matter of sellers understanding the valuation these days."

Farley did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the sale although he previously had told Elite Street that some of the unit's best features are the 360-degree views, the 11-foot ceilings, the large windows and two 45-foot-long galleries that are ideal for displaying art.

Actress Taraji P. Henson sells Streeterville condo for $1.2M: Academy Award-nominated actress Taraji P. Henson on Oct. 22 sold a three-bedroom, 2,159-square-foot condominium on the 36th floor of a Streeterville high-rise for $1.225 million.

Henson, 55, has had a long career in show business, both in film and on TV. She started spending time regularly in the Chicago area starting in 2015, when she began starring in the Fox drama "Empire," which was filmed in Chicago until its run ended in 2020.

In Streeterville, Henson most recently has owned two side-by-side units on the 36th floor of the building at 600 N. Lake Shore Drive. Through an opaque land trust that masks her name, she paid $1.925 million in 2017 for the larger of the two units, a three-bedroom, 2,540-square-foot unit with lake views. Then, in 2019, Henson paid $1.554 million for the smaller, 2,159-square-foot unit next door.

In August 2024, Henson listed both units combined for $3.379 million. She concurrently listed the two condos individually, asking $1.479 million for the smaller one. She cut her asking price to $1.429 million in March and then to $1.25 million in September before finding a buyer.

The unit that Henson sold was recently repainted and has 2½ bathrooms, an open floor plan, walls of windows, a foyer with two oversized closets, spacious living and dining areas, newly refinished hardwood floors, an east-facing balcony, organized closets and blackout shades in each bedroom, and a primary bedroom suite with an organized walk-in closet and a bathroom with a steam shower, a dual vanity and a spa. The unit's kitchen has a breakfast bar, granite countertops, a custom tile backsplash, under-cabinet lighting, a double oven and a newer Samsung refrigerator and dishwasher.

Listing agent Sharon O'Hara of @properties Christie's International Real Estate declined to comment on the sale.

Meanwhile, the larger unit next door that Henson still owns remains available for $1.7 million.

The unit that Henson just sold had a $21,996 property tax bill in the 2024 tax year. It also comes with $1,591 in monthly homeowners association fees.

Henson continues to own a 3,188-square-foot house in Los Angeles' Hollywood Hills area, which she purchased in 2016 for $6.45 million.

Meanwhile, the six-bedroom, 17,597-square-foot mansion on 8.3 acres in Barrington Hills that was the backdrop for "Empire" finally sold in April for $6.5 million. Seller Salvatore "Sam" Cecola had had the mansion on and off the market since 2014, when he first listed it for $13.5 million. On "Empire," the mansion was the home of the show's record mogul and lead character, portrayed by Terrence Howard. Public records do not yet identify that Barrington Hills mansion's buyer.

Although "Empire" mostly filmed in Chicago, the show occasionally filmed scenes at the Barrington Hills mansion, said listing agent Michael LaFido of LPT Realty.

"Although it was built in 2008, it was so timeless — it was very meticulously built and special," LaFido said. "The setting was so unique, it was almost like you were on a peninsula. You were on two lakes and on what felt almost like a private island."

Goldsborough is a freelance reporter.

Names

from Page 1

Simpsons" in which the title family goes to a spa retreat called Rancho Relaxo, Leyhe christened his house using that very name.

Leyhe, who is a freelance creative director, worked with a graphic designer friend to create a logo, which he has since had emblazoned on guest robes and plastic cups. "It's just easier to say, 'Hey, come over to Rancho Relaxo for cocktails at 5,' or, 'The pool's open at Rancho Relaxo,' " he said.

Some, like Lisa Tareila, a 35-year-old publicist in Philadelphia, are even branding just one element of their home. After a trip to Italy, Tareila, who loves to entertain, started referring to their kitchen as "Tareila Trattoria." In 2018, her husband gifted her a set of leather menu covers, and she now inserts handwritten menus for guests.

Main character energy

While many are naming their houses for fun, others are trying to turn them into mini lifestyle brands. In 2024, when Lindsay Silberman, a content creator and the CEO of Hotel Lobby Candle, purchased a vacation home in East Hampton, New York, she couldn't help but make her mark on it.

"I thought, what a perfect opportunity to create a sense of place and a unique identity for the house," she said.

Silberman, 38, and her husband, Matt Stevens, were planning to get some items with their joint monogram, but "I was just bored by the idea," she said.

Since they kept referring to the home as "East Hampton Farmhouse," the name stuck. Silberman, a self-described "branding nerd," made a logo using Canva, a graphic design tool, and a company called Weezie Towels to make custom towels and bath mats.

"The house is meant to be a place for entertaining," Silberman said.

While she hasn't ruled out the idea of renting out the house for photo shoots and events in the future, for now, "I kind of want friends to feel like they're checking into a hotel."

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Changes to charitable giving coming in 2026

The charitable giving season is upon us and changes are afoot. While many people give because they want to do good, the tax rules around philanthropy have always been an added sweetener.

Although nothing has changed for 2025, the recently passed tax bill will usher in three major alterations to charitable giving in 2026, two of which limit the tax benefit of charitable giving for taxpayers who itemize their deductions.

For those in the highest tax bracket (37 percent), there will be a new cap on charitable deductions, from 37 cents on the dollar to 35 cents on the dollar.

Additionally, all itemizers will need to give more than 0.5% of their Adjusted Gross Income to start claiming a deduction. For example, with an AGI of $200,000, total gifts must be more than $1,000 to be deductible.

To get ahead of these new tax rules, one strategy to consider is to open and fund a Donor Advised Fund (DAF). DAFs allow you to contribute cash, appreciated assets (stocks, mutual funds, exchange traded funds, and in some cases, private equity or hedge fund interests, crypto, and restricted stock), take an immediate tax deduction on the contribution, and then grant to an eligible IRS-qualified public charity over months or years.

I recently interviewed Fred Kaynor, managing director of DAFGiving360, a subsidiary of investment giant Charles Schwab. Kaynor says that the "give now, decide later," aspect of DAFs provides donors with "the flexibility to make year-end tax moves before Dec. 31, without feeling rushed to pick specific organizations." While you decide, the money in the DAF can be invested with the potential to grow tax-free.

The third change to charitable giving will provide a tax benefit even to those who take the standard deduction. In 2026, standard filers will be entitled to a $1,000 charitable deduction ($2,000 for joint filers), on top of the statutory standard deduction amount. The deduction applies to cash gifts only (not securities) that go directly to a qualifying public charity (not to donor-advised funds).

Here are some best practices.

Be alert to fraud

Scammers use names that sound like well-known charities to confuse people. Ask for the charity's name, website and mailing address so you can independently confirm the information by using the IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search tool to verify its legitimacy.

Pay with traceable methods

Never donate to an organization that asks for payment via a gift card or by wiring money. The safest way to pay is to use a credit card or send a check.

Don't overshare

Fraudsters know that your personal information is valuable. Never disclose Social Security numbers, credit card numbers, personal identification numbers or passwords unless you are sure that the organization is legit.

Beware of complicated tax schemes

The IRS has warned of a new scam that targets higher-income filers. "Charitable LLC" schemes encourage people to create a limited liability company (LLC) for a fee, then fund it with cash or securities. The scammer will then provide documents that purport to transfer membership in the LLC to a charity. Confused? You should be... stay away!

Jill Schlesinger, CFP, is a CBS News business analyst. A former options trader and CIO of an investment advisory firm, she welcomes comments and questions at askjill@jillonmoney.com. Check her website at www.jillonmoney.com.

DREAMSTIME

The hidden force behind performance

Personality can shape a team's trajectory, but 'vibes-first' hiring carries risks

By Mandy Gilbert | Inc.

When it comes to hiring, technical skills usually get all the attention for many types of jobs. Can they code in this language? Do they have five years of experience in this field? Have they managed projects of this scale before? These questions dominate interviews. Yet, if you've been a leader for any amount of time, you know this: Skills may get someone in the door, but personality determines how far they go.

I have seen highly skilled hires fail within months because they lacked adaptability, empathy or the ability to collaborate with others. On the flip side, I have watched candidates who were slightly underqualified grow quickly into top performers because their energy, curiosity and resilience made them invaluable. Personality is not fluff. It is a hidden force that can shape the culture and trajectory of a team as much as technical ability. The real question is how much weight leaders should give to personality in hiring and how to strike the right balance.

WHY PERSONALITY MATTERS

Hiring is not just about filling a role, it is about shaping the environment where your team spends most of their waking hours. A candidate who brings positivity, adaptability and strong interpersonal skills can elevate everyone around them. They help build trust, encourage collaboration and keep teams motivated through challenges.

Soft skills like empathy and resilience are also crucial in today's workplace. Remote and hybrid teams rely heavily on trust and strong communication. Innovation often comes from collaboration across diverse perspectives, not just technical expertise. When you hire for personality as well as skills, you are investing in someone who can strengthen performance and culture.

THE RISKS OF 'VIBES-FIRST' HIRING

Of course, there is a risk in putting too much emphasis on personality. Gut instinct is not a strategy. I have seen leaders hire the most likable candidate in the room, only to realize months later that they were missing the technical expertise or discipline needed for the role. What felt like charisma in the interview turned into a lack of follow-through on the job.

Research shows that candidates who receive offers are 12 times more likely to be described as having a "great personality" compared to those who did not. Traits like "friendly" or "great energy" often tip the scale, while harder skills get overshadowed.

The problem is that personality can be highly subjective. Bias creeps in quickly, often disadvantaging candidates who do not fit a certain mold of likability. The result is poor fit, higher turnover and teams that lack true diversity of thought.

STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN SKILLS AND PERSONALITY

The best hiring strategies balance personality with proven skills. A great personality cannot compensate for a lack of ability, but technical expertise on its own is not enough either. The most effective hires bring both.

Leaders can create balance by defining what matters most in the role. Start with the outcomes you need. Is this a role that requires constant collaboration and teamwork? If so, prioritize interpersonal skills in your evaluation process. Is the role highly technical and independent? In that case, skills may carry more weight.

The key is structure. Instead of relying on memory or gut instinct, use a mix of structured interview questions, skills assessments, and personality or behavioral tools. These methods help reduce bias and give you a clearer, more objective picture of each candidate. They allow you to measure technical ability and traits like adaptability, collaboration and resilience.

PERSONALITY AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

When done right, personality hiring can give your company a true competitive advantage. A candidate with strong interpersonal skills can spark creativity in brainstorming sessions, resolve conflicts before they escalate and motivate others to do their best work. Combined with technical skills, these qualities can turn an average team into a high-performing one.

For leaders, this means thinking beyond the resume. Do not just ask whether a candidate has the right credentials. Ask how they will show up every day, how they will support their peers, how they will handle the inevitable setbacks. These are the traits that build long-term loyalty and success.

BEYOND THE INTERVIEW

At the end of the day, personality is not a replacement for skills, but it is an essential part of the equation. The future of hiring lies in marrying vibes with data. Leaders who combine structured assessments with their instincts will make stronger, fairer decisions. They will not only find the right people for the role but also the right people for the culture.

So the next time you are interviewing a candidate, do not just ask if they can do the job. Ask whether they will make your team better. Skills can be taught, but personality is often the difference between a hire who fits in and a hire who transforms the workplace.

AdoptUSKids

I asked what kind of family Amina wanted. She said, 'A family like yours.' That's when I knew I had to adopt her.

Denise, adopted 17-year-old Amina

ad COUNCIL

LEARN ABOUT ADOPTING A TEEN YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THE REWARD

ADOPTUSKIDS.ORG

SUCCESS

When to consider naming a trust as IRA beneficiary

Elliot Raphaelson
The Savings Game

DREAMSTIME

Readers of my column know I emphasize the importance of naming beneficiaries for every IRA account. Many ask under what circumstances they should consider naming a trust as an IRA beneficiary.

In a recent Slott report, Andy Ives, an IRA analyst and certified financial planner for the Slott group, summarized the disadvantages of naming a trust as the beneficiary of an IRA account as well when there are advantages to do so.

DISADVANTAGES OF NAMING A TRUST AS BENEFICIARY

A trust should not be named as a beneficiary of an IRA account unless there is a legitimate reason to do so.

In no situation is there an income tax advantage in naming a trust as a beneficiary.

In fact, in most situations the income tax would be higher if you named the trust as a beneficiary. In a trust, tax rates reach 37% when income is more than $15,650. By comparison, if you file your tax return jointly, you would not reach the 37% level until your taxable income exceeded $751,600. If you file singly, your taxable income would have to exceed $626,350 before you reached the 37% level.

After the death of an IRA owner, trust beneficiaries have complex issues. Trust beneficiaries cannot simply establish their own inherited IRA. In that situation, you would have to open a trust-held inherited IRA, and depending on the trust document, the trust beneficiaries could be limited regarding access to the trust assets.

ADVANTAGES

There are situations in which there are advantages in naming the trust as a beneficiary.

Minor as beneficiary: Minors are not able to make distribution decisions when they inherit IRAs. When a minor is named as a beneficiary, the court could require that a guardian be appointed to act on the minor's behalf. Naming the trust as a beneficiary would avoid this situation.

Management factors: A trust would be helpful if the beneficiary, even if an adult, is not capable of managing the assets in the IRA. Many individuals simply do not have the capability of managing financial assets competently. A trust could help provide assistance to someone who is not physically or mentally able to care for themselves or manage money. A trust could protect a vulnerable or unsophisticated individual from unscrupulous individuals who are likely to take advantage of him.

Second marriages: An IRA owner may want to provide income to a second spouse, but after the death of the second spouse, the owner wants the assets to go to the children of the first marriage. In this situation, naming the trust as the beneficiary may be the only way to meet this objective.

Creditor protection: Many states do not provide protection for IRA beneficiaries. In this situation, a trust could be used to protect the beneficiary from potential creditor problems.

Control: Some individuals want to control their money after they die. This is referred to as "ruling from the grave." A trust can accomplish this. However, this is not a healthy plan for family relations. This is not a recommended approach if the beneficiaries are otherwise healthy, mature, responsible adults.

Bottom line: Don't use trusts as beneficiaries unless there are good, valid reasons to do so.

Elliot Raphaelson welcomes your questions and comments at raphelliot@gmail.com.

Start with 'why' for a business built to last

DREAMSTIME

By Peter Economy | Inc.

Is it time for you to find a heroic mission? Do you want to create and lead a business worth fighting for — one that's built to last? I'm sure for any entrepreneur, the answer is an emphatic yes! However, while it's easy to write your business's mission statement, finding one that will actually move the needle on performance takes some work. Here's how to figure out the "why" behind your business and why that matters.

START WITH YOUR 'WHY'

When you're buried in the day-to-day of running a business, it's easy to get lost in the weeds. However, to build a remarkable business, you need to work backward. You need to find the unifying emotion that underpins everything you do.

Your "why" isn't your product, your service or your brand. It's the higher purpose that gets you up at 5 a.m. when everyone else is still in bed. It's the thing that will keep you going when the chips are down, when everyone else is ready to throw in the towel.

As the leader of your business, finding your "why" means having a direct line of sight to your reason for being. You wake up every day believing that the business you're building is important and worthwhile. That belief guides how you think, how you act, how you move through the world.

MAKE YOURSELF ESSENTIAL

Here's a simple test I would like you to consider: If you shut your doors tomorrow, then would anyone really miss you? The answer must be an unequivocal "yes."

To build a business that people miss, you have to deliver something special. You have to offer them something unique, unlike what everyone else is offering. It has to be something that they literally cannot get anywhere else.

You don't need to be different for the sake of being different. You need to be special and become a category of one. Your business must be so good at something and uncommon that your customers don't just become buyers. Instead, they become raving fans.

Before every day begins, ask yourself, "Why do I do what I do?" Don't just think it. Own it. Anchor yourself in it. Then, make everything else you do roll off that rock-solid foundation.

BEYOND THE JOB DESCRIPTION

In a fast-moving world of exponentially increasing complexity, you need to focus on where people will want to work, where they will want to spend their money, and where they will want to put their energy. Your "why" is an answer to the question of what you do and why you do it. It's powerful because it's simple.

The most remarkable businesses are not necessarily the ones with the largest budgets or the most innovative marketing. The ones that really stand out are built by people who aren't willing to compromise on their mission. That conviction becomes a magnet that attracts customers who don't just buy from you — they believe in what you're building.

In a sea of sameness, your "why" is your greatest competitive advantage.

Terry Savage
The Savage Truth

Manage finances while helping people in need

This is the time of year when I typically offer financial planning advice to those who have the flexibility to make charitable gifts or plan ahead for taxes. But this year, more than ever, I am acutely aware of the millions of people to whom that advice doesn't apply.

They are hard-working Americans struggling to make ends meet — to feed and clothe their children, to keep paying the rent or the mortgage, and to provide health insurance for themselves and their families. Or they are seniors whose budgets are strained by rising out-of-pocket medical expenses.

The latest studies show that in 2025 as much as half of credit card spending each month (and in some studies as much as 72% of credit card spending) is done to cover essentials like food, utilities, prescriptions and gas. The latest statistics on credit card balances also don't fully reflect the debt consumers are carrying. That's because the "buy now, pay later" industry that offers "four easy payments" does not report outstanding balances as consumer debt. But that debt can snowball — especially with holiday purchases.

So, my first year-end money tip is to talk about the issue of holiday presents with your family members. Not only your teens with their first credit cards, but to parents of young children who want to put presents under the tree. And, toughest of all, if you have aging parents, please tell them to stop the traditional holiday gifts and focus on their own tight budgets. You can relieve them of the stress of finding gifts for multiple grandchildren.

And now, for those who have flexibility to plan, here are some year-end steps.

Take your required minimum distributions

If you're 73 or older you must take an RMD from your retirement accounts. Do not wait until the last minute, as fines are significant.

Consider charitable contributions

If you're in the fortunate position of not needing to spend the money from your RMD, you can follow the rules on giving money from your IRA directly to a qualified charity. It will be counted against your RMD amount. But make sure the charity actually receives, and acknowledges, the contribution before year-end. There are age and gift limitations to this opportunity.

Be aware of the annual gift exclusion

This year, you are allowed to make a gift of as much as $19,000 to anyone, or multiple people, without filing a gift tax return. This annual gift exclusion does not count against your huge estate tax exemption. For wealthy families, it is an opportunity to give money away tax-free. However, do not impoverish yourself in your old age just because you want to use this exemption!

Make 529 plan contributions

This is the time to add to your child's or grandchild's 529 college savings plan. It is a long-lasting holiday gift that grows tax-free for college expenses, and the account has minimal impact on financial aid.

Remember quarterly tax estimates

If you have significant untaxed income, perhaps from a side job or a pension, you might owe quarterly estimated taxes on Jan. 15. Consult your tax preparer now and set some money aside if you fall into that category. This year, you'll need to pay taxes online, so be sure to set up an account at IRS.gov/payments.

A final note: Even if you're not itemizing deductions, the holiday season is a wonderful time to expand your charitable giving. The news headlines make clear that many people in your community are suffering and will turn to local food pantries to make ends meet.

No one wants to think about debt and taxes as we go into the holiday season. But it's better to be prepared than blind-sided in January. That's the Savage Truth.

Terry Savage is a registered investment adviser and the author of four bestselling books, including "The Savage Truth on Money." Terry responds to questions on her blog at TerrySavage.com.

Bad habits that make you look unprofessional at work

SOURCE: Peter Economy, Inc.

Bad habits can be many things, from playing with your computer in meetings to taking crazy-long breaks or even snacking out loud. However, if you've got any of these bad habits on your list of common workplace behaviors, consider putting a hard stop to them right now.

Waiting forever to respond to messages

In our technology-run hyperspeed world, it's frowned on to take more than 24 hours, sometimes on the weekends as well, to reply to a professional piece of correspondence. A lack of communication is unprofessional. It is often seen as disrespect or disinterest. It also may make the sender wonder if you even received the message in the first place. Keep up with your emails and text messages as often as you can. If you have to be away and unreachable for a while, let supervisors and co-workers know ahead of time, and turn on your vacation responder.

Texting during working hours or meetings

It's a sure-fire sign you're being unproductive when you're on your phone while alone in your office. However, it's a definite office don't when you start texting on your phone when with other people, especially in meetings. It's just a signal to them that you don't care about their time. If you have to text during professional interactions with other people, try to keep it to a minimum. Focus on the work or the task at hand.

Constantly complaining

Everyone has bad days when they're tired, sick, or just not feeling their best. I'm sure you're no exception. However, it is unprofessional to broadcast your feelings and complain to anyone and everyone who will listen. Remember this rule from your childhood: If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. Keep a good, professional attitude at all times.

Interrupting people

If someone is talking to you, the polite thing to do is to let them get to the end of the thought before interjecting your two cents. Interrupting people before they're finished, even if you're just excited to say something, is a sign of arrogance and looks unprofessional. Pay attention to when you choose to let the words fly out of your mouth during an interaction with a peer or boss. Practice active listening. Pause to let others speak before you jump in with your own thoughts.

SUCCESS

DREAMSTIME

This mindset shift makes raising teens less stressful

By Jessica Stillman | Inc.

My daughter is turning 11, and while she is not a teenager yet, she's also not the sweet, unselfconscious kid she was just a couple of years ago. Her moods are stormier, her bonds with her friends more intense, and her eye rolls in my direction more dramatic. I am suddenly, hopelessly "cringe."

I love her blossoming independence and sharp sense of humor. But some days, I remember my own difficult relationship with my parents during my teen years (sorry, mom) and dread what's to come.

I am willing to bet plenty of other entrepreneur parents in my situation feel the same. As we watch our adorable kids morph into ungainly teens, we worry not just for our children, but also for the sanity and stability of the rest of the family. But what if our dread was likely to make navigating the teenage years more challenging? Could a simple shift in expectations make the teen years a happier, more serene time for everyone?

That's what new research by Northwestern University developmental psychologist Yang Qu and his collaborators suggests. The new study, recently published in the journal Child Development, offers those raising teenagers a simple but powerful way to improve how their kids feel and behave through this tricky period.

POSITIVE MINDSET, POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

It's great watching your kids grow into themselves. But in America at least, teenagers also have a (well deserved) reputation for boneheaded risk-taking and emotional instability. Media chatter about the youth mental health crisis hasn't helped put parental minds at ease.

This largely negative view of the teen years isn't universal, however. "In many Western cultures, the teen years are often viewed through a 'storm and stress' lens of rebellion, moodiness, and irresponsibility," Qu told Inc. "In other cultures, like in China, adolescence is seen more positively, as a key time for learning how to become a responsible person and fulfill family obligations."

This led Qu and his team to ask: how does what parents and teens expect the teenage years to be like influence what they're actually like? To find out, the researchers recruited more than 500 Chinese 13- and 14-year olds and tracked them for a year. They measured how positively or negatively the kids viewed adolescence, as well as the closeness of their bonds with their parents, their ability to delay gratification, and their academic motivation and performance.

The data showed that when teenagers saw adolescence as a positive time of greater responsibility and contribution to the community, they had closer and more trusting relationships with their parents. They also bounced back better from setbacks, worked harder at school and did more chores around the house. In short, they did a lot less of the things parents fear and a lot more things they hope to see.

BUSTING STEREOTYPES ABOUT TEENAGERS

It's been quite a while since I had first-hand experience of being a teenager. But as I recall, the idea that these years are a time for embracing responsibility and contributing to the family is very far from the mindset of the average American freshman. So is this finding applicable to western families?

"We believe the core principle is absolutely applicable," Qu responded. "While the 'family obligation' theme is a core cultural virtue in China, the underlying mechanism we found is about the power of positive narratives."

The idea that adolescence is about contributing more to others may be alien to many western teenagers. (Though Qu points out plenty of kids with immigrant backgrounds might see things differently.) But the basic idea of replacing the image of teens as sulky, car-crashing, curfew-breaking ingrates with more positive messages still applies.

"The central idea that challenging negative stereotypes is beneficial is what we believe translates universally. The key takeaway for a global audience is the importance of promoting messages that highlight young people's potential rather than reinforcing negative stereotypes," Qu explained.

The mechanism, in other words, works worldwide. The message just needs local tweaking.

If you doubt you can sell your teen on the exciting possibility of more family obligations, how else might you frame these years more positively?

Corresponding with Qu reminded me of a book I read a few years back, "Inventing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain" by Sarah Blakemore, a neuroscientist who researches the adolescent brain. The science was fascinating. But what I remember most was the idea that erratic, risky teenage behavior isn't pointless. It's a side effect of brain changes that help teens establish their identity and take bold action to realize their vision for themselves.

"It's easy to mock teenagers and collectively lament how badly behaved and useless they are," Blakemore writes in the book. "But many adolescents do amazing things — they are entrepreneurs, coders, musicians, athletes, artists and scientists. Adolescence is a time of heightened creativity and novel thinking, energy and passion."

Another fruitful way to think of the rebelliousness and boldness of the teenage years is as an adaptation designed to help young people explore themselves and the world and break through barriers to find new solutions. That's a positive message American teens might be more eager to buy.

HOW TO MAKE RAISING TEENS MORE PLEASANT FOR ALL

Whatever particular way families decide to frame the teen years, Qu's work suggests that, if you tell your kid positive things about adolescence, they'll respond by behaving more positively.

"Parents and teachers can point out that challenges are a normal part of growth at any life stage, not a sign that something is wrong with the teen years," Qu recommends. But "the positive view must be paired with action," he stresses.

Ask your child to contribute to their family and community. Celebrate their passions and experiments as part of the quest to become themselves. Remember their quickness to spot hypocrisy may be annoying, but it also drives progress.

"Acknowledge their contributions as meaningful and valuable," Qu sums up, as "this gives teens a chance to live out the positive narrative of being a capable and contributing person."

The bottom line: when teens are shown a more positive way to view this often mocked phase of growing up, they're more likely to navigate it in a way that's healthier and more pleasant for both themselves and those around them.

How to deal with the inevitable office jerk

By Peter Economy | Inc.

There's always at least one in every office. The employee who regales everyone with crude jokes. They are full of gratuitous insults or off-color commentary. Research shows that a shocking 80% of employees say their workplace is toxic.

You might try to ignore this co-worker and be the bigger person. Perhaps you avoid them, fake a smile, or use up your own valuable mental resources and actually befriend the bully. What's easy to forget, however, is that silence is not strategy — it's permission.

There's some good news. Dealing with toxic people in the workplace doesn't have to be as hard as you might think. As with the playground bully, sometimes all it takes is to shine some light on their actions. In the workplace, the trick is to select the appropriate person to light up to have the greatest leverage.

As it happens, I wrote an entire book about dealing with toxic people: "Wait, I'm Working With Who?!?" However, here are a couple particularly effective tips for dealing with jerks in your office or on the other side of that Zoom call.

INDIRECT INTERVENTION

Bombarding a difficult person with complaints will only make them defensive and cause them to circle the wagons against you. A more subtle and healthier intervention is the indirect version. It works particularly well when the behavior is annoying the entire group or in a social setting.

Let's say someone from a different department — a friend of one of the members of your team — joins one of your meetings. Then, they start making crass or inappropriate comments. Call them out for their bad behavior right then and there, neutralizing the situation—a.k.a., a direct intervention. Then, take your employee aside after the meeting and explain how that kind of behavior is not tolerated on the team. Ask them to convey that message to their friend from the other department.

Why does this work? Simple. The jerk will be more likely to listen and change their behavior when it comes from someone whose opinion they value and want to impress. They might be willing to tell you to get lost, but they're a lot less likely to do the same to a friend or acquaintance.

DREAMSTIME

ESCALATION

If the difficult person is a co-worker and the behavior continues even after you tried a calm, direct conversation, it's time to start going up the chain. Talking to your supervisor in private is not ratting them out. Instead, it's professional escalation.

Escalating a problem (one you should document, by the way) to your manager or higher-ups is by far the most effective way to effect change and stamp out bad behavior.

By doing so, you're going directly to the person who has the most vested interest and power to stop it. You've already done the hard part by documenting your case. Now you are going through the most effective organizational route to get something done.

It's not the playground anymore. Be an adult. Speak up.

Wealth gap solution may be employee ownership

By Mike Brady | Fast Company

When an X user recently pointed out the eye-popping increase in billionaires' wealth since 2015, entrepreneur Mark Cuban, a billionaire himself, responded with his opinion on why, but he urged followers to consider a different question: "Why are we not giving incentives to companies to require them to give shares in their companies to all employees, at the same percentage of cash earnings as the CEO?" Cuban said.

It is the right question to be asking. Because while the debate over wealth inequality continues, the solution has been hiding in plain sight for decades.

The top 10% of U.S. households now control 67% of all wealth, while the bottom half holds just 2.5%. The typical American worker approaches retirement with about $4,000 in savings, which is less than the cost of one month in an assisted living facility. That imbalance is not sustainable, economically or socially.

The fix does not require new legislation or another corporate responsibility pledge. It lies in a proven model that has been quietly transforming companies and communities for 50 years: employee ownership.

EMBRACED BY SILICON VALLEY

Silicon Valley figured this out long ago. Equity compensation has been the foundation of the tech sector's innovation economy since the 1970s. Stock options allowed startups to attract world-class talent without paying top-tier salaries, align employee incentives with company performance and build wealth for workers who might otherwise never own an asset.

Yet outside of tech, broad-based ownership remains rare. Fewer than 7,000 U.S. companies — mostly in traditional sectors like manufacturing, construction, and distribution — operate under an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP). The results, however, mirror the Valley's success.

Employee-owned firms grow more than 2% faster per year than their peers and are half as likely to go bankrupt. During the 2008 financial crisis, they laid off workers at only one-third the rate of conventional firms. For employees, the impact is just as powerful. ESOP participants hold 92% higher median household wealth, twice the retirement savings, and 33% higher median income than comparable workers.

This is not philanthropy. It is a durable, market-tested strategy that drives growth, resilience and equity at the same time.

THE TIMING IS RIGHT

Several trends make this the perfect moment to bring ownership to scale.

A massive generational handoff is underway: Ten thousand baby boomers retire each day, many owners of successful small and midsize businesses with no succession plan. Transferring ownership to employees keeps those businesses rooted in their communities, preserves good jobs and rewards founders with fair market value.

The retirement crisis demands new solutions: With average savings at historic lows, workers need wealth-building tools that go beyond 401(k) plans. Ownership creates an asset base that compounds over time, restoring what pensions once offered.

Labor shortages are reshaping industries: As skilled workers grow scarce, companies that offer ownership will win the competition for talent, not only by paying well but by giving people a reason to stay.

Economic volatility favors resilience: Employee-owned companies outperform during downturns because people at every level have a stake in the outcome. Ownership builds financial and cultural strength.

BEYOND GOOD INTENTIONS

America has no shortage of programs designed to help workers. What it lacks is awareness and adoption of the ownership mechanisms that allow employees to share in the value they create. As long as labor and ownership remain separated, inequality will continue to deepen.

When employees have an equity stake, their focus shifts from completing tasks to building lasting value. They think like owners because they are owners, and that mindset fuels innovation, strengthens loyalty, and creates a powerful cycle of trust and accountability. The impact case is clear, and the business case is even stronger. Broad-based ownership builds companies that last. It keeps wealth circulating within communities instead of extracting it, and it turns employees into long-term investors in the enterprise they help build.

THE MOMENT TO ACT

We are standing on the edge of a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine capitalism for shared prosperity. Employee ownership will not fix every inequity in our economy, but it addresses one of the most fundamental: who benefits from the value a company creates.

Cuban's challenge should not disappear into the social media ether. It should become a call to action for policymakers, investors, and business leaders to make employee ownership the standard, not the exception.

RIDES

GRASSO'S GARAGE

2025 Mercedes G-Wagon goes electric with G580

By Marc D. Grasso
Boston Herald

In 2025, Mercedes takes the flagship G-Wagon electric, and the G580 EQ is born.

As a long-time lover of the boxy-exterior styling of the modern day SUV, Mercedes continues to ride on the long-lasting reins of the G-Wagon.

Similar to the Land Rover Defender and entry-level SUV such as the Honda Element and Dodge Nitro, the boxy exterior shape still has a great demand in the SUV market today.

The Mercedes G580 still sports the G-Wagon's boxy shape. **MARC D. GRASSO/BOSTON HERALD**

In Grasso's Garage, the G-Wagon is a huge want given its off-roading ability, styling and history of exceptional reliability; the G-Wagon earns all the accolades.

With the G-Wagon going electric in 2025, we recognize the new G-Wagon nameplate as the G580, confirming its amount of horsepower as 579. As torque-y as can be, and over 850 pound-feet of it, the G580 is a dream luxury cruiser that has no problem pinning you to the seat and getting out of the way quickly and smoothly.

As you float in this almost 7,000-pound tank on wheels, the appeal and interior is what continues to ensure the MB is at the height of its game. Standard interior options on the G580 include Burmester 3D surround sound audio, comfort package, keyless start, multicolor ambient lighting and power sunroof, while all-wheel drive, low range gearbox, torque vectoring and a 200 kW DC fast charging system is also standard. Upgrades on our G580 tester were a dark blue nonmetallic exterior paint, black panel radiator grille, black logo package, leather grab handles, night package and an interior plus package. To say that the G580 is luxury on wheels and in style is an understatement.

2025 MERCEDES BENZ G580
MSRP: $161,500
MPGe: 68 city / 56 highway / 62.2 as tested
As tested: $183,250

Packed with a $161K base price, the G580 is a dream on wheels. Its electric engine delivers nicely for those local travelers looking to make a statement while enjoying their everyday ride around town. It has great interior comfort, storage space and that long history of great exterior appeal.

Grasso's Garage is here for you! Are you in the market for a new car? I would be happy to provide my honest input. All you have to do is email me: marc.grasso@bostonherald.com.

Experts compare Ford Expedition and GMC Yukon to determine which large SUV is the better buy

By James Riswick
Edmunds

Let's say you need a vehicle with room for more than five passengers, a large cargo area, and the ability to pull a heavy trailer. A full-size three-row SUV should work well, but which one?

The most significant news this year is the redesigned Ford Expedition. Ford has given its biggest SUV a complete makeover with a more upscale interior, new technology features and a novel split-opening tailgate.

It's a compelling pick for a big SUV, but it's not the only one vying for your attention. The GMC Yukon got its own refresh for 2025. It's not as comprehensive as the Expedition's, but it too features a significant interior and technology overhaul that further distances it from its mechanical twin, the Chevy Tahoe.

Edmunds' auto experts tested both to determine which one is the better buy.

POWER AND FUEL ECONOMY

The Expedition has a turbocharged 3.5-liter V6 in two versions. The standard-output V6 produces 400 horsepower and 480 lb-ft of torque, while the high-output version pumps out 440 horsepower and 510 lb-ft. EPA-estimated fuel economy is 19 mpg combined with standard rear-wheel drive and 18 mpg combined with optional four-wheel drive.

The Yukon's engine choices are an interesting contrast. The standard 5.3-liter V8 produces 355 horsepower and 383 lb-ft, while the 6.2-liter V8 standard on top trim levels has a more competitive 420 horsepower and 460 lb-ft. Fuel economy is up to 17 mpg combined for the 5.3-liter V8; the 6.2-liter gets 16 mpg combined.

At the Edmunds test track, an Expedition with the high-output V6 accelerated from zero to 60 mph in 5.5 seconds. That's a second quicker than the Yukon with its bigger V8. The Yukon does have an efficiency ace up its sleeve, however. You can get an optional turbodiesel six-cylinder that makes 305 horsepower and 495 lb-ft and gets up to an EPA-estimated 23 mpg combined.

Advantage: Tie

SPACE AND TOWING

Third-row space is exceptional in both, especially for tall teens or adults.

On paper, though, the Expedition has a slight advantage with its 36.5 inches of third-row legroom compared with the Yukon's 34.9 inches. Their respective specs also indicate the Yukon has more cargo space. However, in Edmunds' testing, Ford's full-size SUV could hold more pieces of luggage behind its third row seat. Specifically, the cargo area is wider back there.

For really big gear hauling, the Expedition can tow a maximum of 9,600 pounds. The Yukon maxes out at 8,400 pounds.

Advantage: Ford Expedition

COMFORT

Both of these SUVs are well-suited for big families. There are subtle differences, however. The Expedition's greatest strength is undoubtedly space. There's ample room for passengers in every seat, and the seats are comfortable, especially for the driver and front passenger. We like them better than the Yukon's front seats for comfort on long drives. We've also found that the Expedition has less wind and road noise on the highway than the Yukon.

Most SUVs based on trucks are subject to undue vibrations and reverberations throughout the cabin, but the Expedition keeps those to a minimum. It also has a smooth ride over bumps and ruts. The Yukon offers an optional adaptive air suspension that can adjust the SUV's ride height and automatically soften the shock absorbers to help smooth out the ride even further, but overall we've found the Expedition more relaxing and comfortable to drive.

Advantage: Ford Expedition

TECHNOLOGY

The GMC Yukon has a distinctive 16.8-inch portrait-oriented touchscreen that features a Google-based operating system. The Google integration provides the familiarity of Google Maps and other Google features, such as the voice-based Assistant app. There is an 11-inch digital instrument panel as well with customizable layouts and information. This is a very good tech package that Edmunds rates highly for its functionality and feature content.

That said, we rate the Expedition's system even higher. It consists of a 13.2-inch touchscreen interface that works in concert with an enormous 24-inch ultra-wide dash-top screen that acts as a combination instrument panel and customizable secondary display for the touchscreen. These screens are bright and easy to read and don't feel like tech for tech's sake — they actually improve functionality.

Both SUVs offer hands-free highway driving assist technology: GMC's is called Super Cruise and Ford's is called BlueCruise. Both are effective and reliable, and if either enjoys the slightest advantage, it's the GMC thanks to its light-up steering wheel that makes it perfectly obvious when the system is operating or needs your attention.

Advantage: Ford Expedition

Edmunds says: While the Yukon is luxurious, comfortable and packed with impressive technology features, the Ford Expedition quite simply outdoes it in most respects. It also boasts multiple high-end trim levels that easily hold their own against the top trims of the Yukon for luxury appeal.

2026 GMC Yukon. **GENERAL MOTORS**

AUTO REVIEW

No window, no problem

Polestar 4 chases Tesla with innovative digital tech that's changing SUV's tools

By Henry Payne
Detroit News

On two-lane Route 117 in Quebec, I jumped into the left lane, nailed the throttle in my 544-horsepower, 2026 Polestar 4 and — ZOT! — was past the truck in front of me in the blink of an eye. I glanced in the rear camera mirror, pulled back into the right lane, and gave the truck a wave.

Except the Polestar 4 has no rear window, and the trucker never saw my gesture. Haw.

Polestar's latest compact SUV is quick, cool and — as its clever rear design implies — innovative; just like Tesla models that pioneered the EV segment over the last dozen years. With Tesla in mind, Volvo (and its Chinese owners) spun off its Polestar performance badge in 2017 as a full-line electric vehicle brand. Where Volvo has developed EVs with its safety and design north stars, Polestar has leaned into speed and innovation.

The fourth — and most important model to date in Polestar's young journey — the 4 is a Scandinavian Tesla Model Y. Call it Polesla.

Like the camera mirror in Tesla's Cybertruck, the 4's rearview unit is necessitated by its radical rear roof design. Determined to make the compact SUV look like a racy sports coupe (while maintaining utilitarian rear seat and cargo space), the Polestar 4 does without a rear window, confident that the advance of digital mirrors and blind-spot assist would cover the void.

It works, though old habits (like my trucker wave) will die hard.

It's a reminder that digital technology is changing every tool in the automobile. Cadillac innovated the camera mirror last decade. At the Detroit Grand Prix in 2018, I asked race car driver Jorden Taylor what his 600-horsepower, $730,000 winged Cadillac DPi.V.R cyborg shared with a production Cadillac.

"Two things," said the affable race pilot. "The V-8 engine block and the camera mirror. You can't see out of these mid-engine race cars, and the camera mirror allows me an unobstructed view out back so I can see my competitors and slower traffic around me. I love it."

Now it's standard in the $57,400 Polestar 4. It will not be to everyone's liking in a ferociously competitive premium class that includes Model Y, Cadillac Optiq, Mustang Mach-E, Genesis GV70, BMW iX3 and Lexus RZ. All with rear windows.

What won't be polarizing is the Polestar's rear head and legroom. At a charging station (more on that later), I hopped into the back seat, where the standard panoramic roof arched backward above me. It easily cleared my 6'5" head before plunging into the rear tailgate, much further rearward than other roofs in the segment. The result is plenty of light for the rear passenger. Sun too strong? Opt for the cool two-mode roof that will turn opaque at a touch of a button.

The 2026 Polestar 4 is aimed at the volume, compact luxury SUV segment. **HENRY PAYNE/DETROIT NEWS**

2026 POLESTAR 4

Price: Base $57,400, including $1,400 destination charge ($64,300 Dual Motor as tested)

Powerplant: Lithium-ion battery pack mated to single/dual electric motors

Horsepower/Torque: 272/ 253 pound-feet (single rear motor); 544/ 506 pound-feet (dual front and rear motors)

Performance: Zero to 60 mph, 3.7 seconds (mfr.); top speed, 124 mph

Range: 310 miles (single motor), 280 miles (dual front and rear motors)

I could also move the rear seat back, comfortably stretching my legs to sit behind myself. Still, competitors like Tesla and Optiq offer more room.

Like its peer internal combustion engine segment, compact EV SUVs are where the sales are, and brands have brought their A game.

The Model Y is so good it was the second best selling non-pickup in the market last year after the gas-powered mainstream Toyota RAV4 compact SUV. The Polestar follows the formula with distinctive styling, a simple interior and raw speed.

South Korea-made and Chinese-owned (Geely), the 4 is the third mass production model in the Polestar lineup, following the (now withdrawn) 2 hatchback and 3 midsize SUV. The 4 (Polestar numbers its vehicles in order of rollout) has matured with its own design cues.

Gone are the Volvo-like Thor's Hammer headlights in the 2 and 3, replaced by dual-blade headlights, grille-less sports car fascia and horizontal tail lamps. The separation from Volvo is important, even as Polestar stays true to spare Scandinavian style prized by everyone from Ikea furniture to Orrefors glass shoppers.

The 4's exterior is cleaner than the busier lines of the 2 and 3. With its wide stance, coupe roofline and deeply-scalloped rocker panels, the SUV gives off a sporty, athletic vibe.

The simplicity continues inside. With key in pocket, the 4 recognized me as I approached, extending the flush door handles like a handshake. When I settled into the comfortable high-backed seats, the Polestar automatically turned on. No need to touch the brake pedal, push a button, insert a key. Slick.

As was the spare interior anchored by a 15.4-inch horizontal screen. No buttons cluttered the dash or doors. Tesla-like, I adjusted my side mirrors, steering wheel and air vents in the screen. Operated by Google Built-in (like General Motors EVs), other functions can be controlled by voice command.

It tracks Tesla on charging, too, with NACS (North American Charging Standard) connector so you can navigate to — and fill up at — Tesla's ubiquitous Supercharger network.

The 4 trails the segment's best EVs, the Model Y and Optiq, in two respects.

First, while my $64,300 all-wheel-drive tester boasts eye-popping acceleration numbers on par with a Model Y Performance, the Polestar is a significant 800 pounds porkier and a big financial ask for a new luxury badge.

Second, while the equally luxurious Optiq is also porky, both the Cadillac and the Tesla offer superior hands-free driving systems. Navigate from, say, Montreal to Detroit, and the Tesla (and Caddy) will take you there hands-free on four lanes. Not the 4, which only sports adaptive cruise control.

Still, it's great to see a new badge mature, and the Polestar 4 is a welcome addition to the U.S. market. Just remember to roll down your window if you want to wave at the trucker you just blew by.

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Villa St.Benedict 1920 Maple Ave.,Lisle, IL60532	630-852-0345				RC,AA,AL, EFC	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

*Type: SA Senior Apartments • RC Retirement Communities • AA Active Adults • AL Assisted Living • MC Memory Care • LFP Life Plan Community • EFC Entrance Fee Community

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PRIMETIME

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Timeless traditions

Company dancers with Joffrey Ballet, Annabelle de la Nuez and Jose Pablo Castro Cuevas, perform a pas de deux from a production of "The Nutcracker." (Katie Miller)

The stories behind Chicago's beloved holiday happenings

The holidays have arrived, and that means Chicago is aglow with joyous traditions that light up every corner of the city.

From sipping mulled wine at the Christkindlmarket to settling in for a matinee of "The Nutcracker," each beloved custom carries a story all its own. Here is a look at the history behind some of these rather famous — and festive — traditions.

Christmas tree at the Walnut Room

Since as far back as the early 1900s, hundreds of thousands of diners have gazed in awe at the incredible 45-foot evergreen that hangs over the dining room fountain of the famed Walnut Room, originally inside Marshall Field & Company and now Macy's on State Street. The tradition began at Marshall Field & Company in 1907, when the restaurant staff reportedly put up a small tree. Over time, the tree grew to 25 feet, and by 1934, Field's was hoisting a live 45-foot tree each holiday.

This tradition continued until the late 1950s, when sourcing, transporting, and safely suspending fresh trees indoors became increasingly complex. Maintenance, drying branches, and fire-code concerns also grew. Today, the tree is artificial, allowing the store to maintain the signature height without worrying about sap, needles, or the limited structural strength of real trunks. It also meant designers could pre-engineer a modular frame for faster assembly and yearly re-theming.

Each year, the tree takes on a new theme, like the "Whimsical Toy Shop" in 2022 or "Sweet Treats" in 2023, and Macy's visual and design teams are responsible for planning the look and decorating to that theme. Weighing in at around 3,000 pounds, the logistical feat requires over 12 hours of labor and thousands of lights and ornaments to build the structure, which starts at the star and then lifts and attaches successive framed sections, filling with branches and ornaments as they go.

New this year, Macy's is honoring the tree's history by renaming the Walnut Room the "Marshsall Field's Walnut Room," complete with a commemorative plaque. The tree itself features a Marshall Field's theme, decorated in green, blue and gold, adding iconic symbols like Frango Chocolates and the famed green clock.

The Art Institute lion wreaths

While the lion sculptures guarding Chicago's Art Institute are striking on their own, the holidays bring an extra element of flair to these iconic statues with the "wreathing of the lions" holiday tradition. The pair of bronze lions at the Michigan Avenue entrance was unveiled in 1894,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Adorned with giant holiday wreaths, the iconic bronze lion statues, guarding the Art Institute since 1894, herald the season in a big way.

Someone to know

Red Kettle volunteer gives thanks by joyfully ringing the iconic bells

The bells of the Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign are a familiar holiday sound each year. Standing outside of retail establishments throughout the Chicago area, these bell ringers make an appeal to everyone walking by to help others by depositing a donation into a red kettle.

If you have ever wondered if those few coins you drop into the kettle make a difference, Tina Evans' story will confirm their powerful impact. Evans, who is now a Downers Grove Realtor, is so grateful for the assistance she received from the Salvation Army that she rings with gusto in front of the Wheaton Danada Square Jewel Food store each year. She says that money tossed into those kettles years ago changed her life and gave her a chance.

Tough times

Evans freely shares the story of her struggles. "I actually was living in an old semi-trailer in an auto pound in Chicago," says Evans when recalling her teenage years. "I left home at 14 because I was being abused. I went from friend to friend for a while and then stayed at the auto pound."

Finally, Evans found safety by walking through the doors of a Salvation Army Center, where they helped her find food, clothing and a place to live. Life settled down for a while but then Evans got pregnant and had a child at the age of 17. She got married and tried to make life work. After giving birth to a second child, she was forced to leave when her husband turned violent. This time, she knew exactly where to go for help. Once again Salvation Army helped her find housing, food and a job.

"I had been hiding and they helped me find my way," says Evans. "They gave me the courage and the determination to make something of myself."

There were many challenges along the way. Evans married four times, divorced twice and had two husbands pass away. She had two more children and admits that she "made some mistakes." But she turned to the Salvation Army, where she says, "they never asked a lot of questions or expected anything. They didn't give me a handout. They gave me a hand up again and again."

Giving back

Today, Evans, 63, owns a farm and she is ready to give back. So each year for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Tina Evans brings the joy of the season to her post in Wheaton as a dedicated Salvation Army Red Kettle volunteer.

2 Year-round
Holiday gifts that keep on giving

4 Tree trimming
Tracing the history of ornaments

8 School is out
Fun things to do with the grands

Look for the next PrimeTime on Sunday, Feb. 15

GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

Spread the cheer all year-round

Wish there was a way to remind someone year-round that you're thinking of them?

A variety of options are available. Gifts that keep on giving fall into several categories — from subscription boxes and memberships at local attractions to experience-based gifts and charitable donations in someone's name.

Here are some suggestions.

Go City/Chicago Explorer Pass

Ideal for out-of-town visitors, the Go City Explorer Pass is a flexible sightseeing pass that allows the user to choose a number of attractions to visit within a certain timeframe. The digital pass is downloaded online.

Several of the current attractions include the Field Museum, Adler Planetarium, Chicago Children's Museum and Navy Pier Ferris Wheel and Rides. Prices vary depending on the number of attractions selected.

An adult explorer pass, for example, for three attractions was recently listed for $109. Visit gocity.com/en/chicago.

Chicago Botanic Garden membership

Loved ones who enjoy beautiful landscapes and rich floral displays might like an annual gift membership to the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe. The Garden spans 385 acres and each season brings new exhibitions. The Garden's Lightscape installation has become a popular destination during the holiday season. An individual annual pass is $125. Visit chicagobotanic.org.

Cooking lessons

The Chopping Block in Chicago's Lincoln Square neighborhood offers several different types of cooking classes for the novice and beyond.

"Cooking classes make the perfect gift because they go far beyond the moment. You're giving someone an experience — a chance to learn new skills, connect with others, and gain confidence that lasts long after the class ends. Every time they cook at home, they'll remember who gave them that gift," says Chef Lisa Counts, owner of The Chopping Block

Gift cards are available. The five-day boot camp is an immersive course that mirrors culinary school. The hands-on taste of Italy class teaches students how to prepare an authentic Italian meal ($155). Classes are listed on the website. Visit thechoppingblock.com.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra Concert Series

Experiences are often more meaningful and memorable than other types of gifts. Tickets to concerts or sporting events are a good choice. Classical music has a timeless appeal. In 2026, for example, the Chicago Symphony offers a three-concert chamber music series. You can also create your own series by picking three or more concerts from the list of offerings, depending on different tastes. Visit cso.org.

Atlas Coffee Club

What better way to wake up Christmas morning, and every other morning, than with a gift of coffee from around the world? Different coffees from the world's best coffee-growing regions are delivered once a month. Subscriptions are available for three, six, or 12 months. Visit atlascoffeeclub.com.

Griffin Museum of Science & Industry

Chicago's premier museums offer annual memberships for year-round enjoyment. The Griffin Museum of Science & Industry is not a one-and-done experience. There's so much to see that just one visit isn't enough. Many may remember the miniature Fairy Castle or the World War II U-505 German submarine. Traditional highlights of the museum are complemented by rotating exhibits. The Spider-Man exhibit runs through Feb. 8.

An individual gift membership for a year, which also includes admission for one guest, costs $95. It also includes four tickets to the giant dome theater with its five-story wrap-around screen. The annual Christmas Around the World and Holidays of Light (Nov. 8, 2025, to Jan. 5, 2026) features more than 50 trees and displays. Placed throughout the trees are displays representing international seasonal celebrations of light, such as Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali and more. Visit griffinmsi.org

Cratejoy

This website is a marketplace of recurring subscription boxes. A new surprise arrives every month. Find everything from book sets to activity kits for kids, self-care items and boxes for those with special interests, from cat lovers to golfers. Visit cratejoy.com.

BarkBox

Don't forget the family dog. BarkBox offers a monthly box of surprises for Fido. Pups get a customized box of toys and treats every month. Every BarkBox has two innovative toys, two all-natural bags of treats and a chew, curated from each month's unique themed collection. Several different plans are available, starting at $24 a month. Visit barkbox.com.

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Celebrating food, faith and culture

The December holidays bring family and friends together to celebrate religious and cultural customs. Food, games, music and storytelling weave their way through the different holidays prominent this month and featured below.

The Feast of the Seven Fishes

Every Dec. 24, many Italian and Italian-American families gather to celebrate "La Vigilia di Natale" — the Vigil of Christmas — with what has become known as the Feast of the Seven Fishes. This tradition has its roots in southern Italy, where Christmas Eve was historically a day of fasting and abstinence from meat, following Roman Catholic practice.

Instead of meat, seafood and fish became the centerpiece. Families would prepare multiple fish dishes, each cooked with regional flavors and techniques.

The number seven is widely believed to represent the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. The mission is to serve at least seven different types of seafood and fish and not have to resort to adding a can of tuna to the table to reach the must-have seven.

Typical dishes might include baccalà (salted cod, fried or stewed), calamari (squid), scungilli (conch), mussels, clams, shrimp, sardines, and a whole roasted fish. In coastal towns, the menu reflected what the fishermen had brought in that day; in landlocked areas, salted and preserved fish were more common, like salted cod.

When Italian immigrants arrived in the United States, they carried this tradition with them, often adapting it to the seafood available in their new home. Over time, the feast became a cornerstone of Italian-American holiday culture — not just a religious observance, but a time for family, storytelling and the preservation of heritage.

Today, the Feast of the Seven Fishes remains a vibrant celebration, blending faith, food, and history into a single night that honors both the birth of Christ and the endurance of family traditions across generations.

Hanukkah lights

Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, is an eight-day Jewish holiday that celebrates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem and the miracle of the oil that lasted eight days. The holiday this year is Sunday, Dec. 14 through Monday, Dec. 22. It is filled with joy, family gatherings and marking traditions that connect the past to the present.

One of the most important Hanukkah traditions is lighting the menorah, a special nine-branched candelabrum. Each night, one additional candle is lit using the shamash (helper candle) until all candles are glowing brightly. Families often place the menorah in a window to share the light and message of hope with the outside world. This ritual reminds Jews of the miracle of the oil that burned in the reclaimed temple far longer than the one day it should have. This wondrous event inspired the Jewish sages to proclaim a yearly eight-day festival, according to history.com.

Food also plays a central role during Hanukkah. Because oil symbolizes the ancient miracle, fried foods are especially popular. Traditional dishes include latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly-filled doughnuts). Families gather to cook and share these foods, turning the act of eating into a joyful celebration of faith and heritage.

Another beloved Hanukkah custom is playing dreidel, a spinning top game marked with Hebrew letters that stand for the phrase "A great miracle happened there." Children and adults play for chocolate coins, nuts or candies, blending fun with history. Gift-giving has also become part of modern Hanukkah celebrations, with small presents or money, known as gelt, shared each night.

Hanukkah is more than a commemoration of an ancient event — it is a celebration of perseverance, light and faith. Hanukkah continues to unite families and communities in joy and remembrance year after year.

Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday guided by seven principles practiced each day of the celebration.

This caviar bar is a contemporary addition to the traditional Feast of the Seven Fishes Christmas Eve meal.

Lighting the menorah nightly is the mainstay of Hannukah celebrations.

Kwanzaa principles

Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday that celebrates African American heritage, unity, and community. It was founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor of Africana Studies, to honor African traditions and values. Celebrated from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1, Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday but a cultural one, emphasizing collective responsibility, creativity and purpose.

The celebration is guided by the Nguzo Saba, or the Seven Principles, which are practiced each day of the holiday. In the Swahili language, these principles are Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity) and Imani (Faith), according to the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Each evening, families light a candle on the kinara, a candleholder with seven candles — three red, three green and one black — symbolizing these principles and the African diaspora, global disbursement of people of African descent.

Kwanzaa traditions also include storytelling, music, dance and the sharing of African-inspired foods. Families often decorate their homes with African art, colorful cloths like kente, and symbols such as the mkeka (mat), which represents the foundation of community. On the final day, participants join in the karamu, a communal feast that celebrates unity and cultural pride.

Through these traditions, Kwanzaa encourages reflection on identity, history and the importance of community. It serves as a time for African Americans to reconnect with their roots, celebrate their achievements and strengthen bonds that extend beyond the holiday season.

All dressed up | Christmas tree ornaments are an integral part of holiday magic

It's time to pull out the boxes of ornaments to decorate the Christmas tree. Whether it is a delicate blown glass creation or a glitter-covered cardstock circle your child made in the third grade, ornaments have become an essential part of holiday decorating around the world.

According to the ornament company Lenox, the first ornaments were actually apples, nuts and other edible treats. Back in the 16th century, German families brought a sturdy fir into their home, calling it a Paradise Tree and decorated it with fruits to symbolize the fruits of Eden. Since those early beginnings, tree ornaments have taken on many other shapes and meanings and continue to evolve.

A delicate glass bird ornament perches on a tree.

Capturing nature in glass

According to the House of Pixen, a maker of glass ornaments, a German craftsman named Hans Greiner is credited with coming up with the idea of creating glass fruits and natural images to hang on the tree. These ornaments, originally called "baubles," were created by making a mold of a desired shape and then blowing the glass inside the mold. Silver nitrate or other metallic compounds were added to the inside or painted on the outside to create an exquisite decoration for the tree.

When Britain's Queen Victoria saw the baubles, she brought them to Great Britain and the ornaments eventually spread to America. The American retail giant F.W. Woolworth started selling them in his stores in the United States and by the end of the 19th century, glass ornaments were hanging on trees across the country. Instead of only fruit and nuts, the ornaments took on shapes from snowmen to simple orbs with jeweled and glittered exteriors.

A glittery nod to the movie "White Christmas."

Through the years

In looking at ornaments throughout history, Lenox, another American ornament company, tracks ornament trends. During the Roaring Twenties, ornaments were all about glitter and shine with lots of silver and gold. During the 1930s and '40s, when the country sank into an economic Depression, families took to crafting their own ornaments using paper, fabric scraps and whatever they could spare.

When the space age dawned in the 1960s, ornaments took on vibrant patterns and more whimsical designs. It was fun to break away from traditional snowmen and Santas and hang rockets and stars on the tree. In the early 2000s, the ideas of sustainability and ecology took center stage and people turned back to using more natural or even recycled materials for ornament construction. Now in the digital age, some ornaments have their own LED lights, can play a carol or scroll family photos.

A way to honor

The Griffin Museum of Science and Industry has featured ornaments of all shapes, sizes and meanings for several decades. It all started in 1942 when the museum's president, Lenox Lohr, came up with a way to honor the 12 allied nations fighting in World War II.

He put up one tree in the museum, but changed the ornaments and decorations each day to reflect the styles of a different allied country. People came to see the tree each day and "it all grew from there," says Matt Porth, the deputy director of guest engagement at the museum.

Today, the display features more than 50 artificial trees that are 12 feet tall, plus one grand tree in the center of the display that is four stories tall. Different groups, organizations and families decorate the trees.

"There is a large interest in doing a tree," says Porth. "I've been working on this for 26 years and there has always been a waiting list each year for people who want to do a tree. We only have rooms for so many trees, though, so we have to limit the number."

A spider ornament from the Ukranian tree.

A way to share

Some of the trees in the exhibit celebrate cultural beliefs. "My favorite is the tree from the Ukraine," says Porth. "The legend goes that a family found a tree and took it into their home but they could not afford ornaments. When the spiders who lived in the house heard about the empty tree, they spent the night weaving webs of silver and gold all over the tree. I have heard that all the gold and silver webs is how people began hanging tinsel on their trees."

The Ukrainian tree in the museum features spider webs and spiders that recall the legend.

Sometimes it is the materials that set a tree apart from others. The Lithuanian Tree features white ornaments fashioned from paper straws. "In Lithuania, ornaments are traditionally made from natural straw. But they modernized it by using paper straws instead," says Porth. The carefully crafted paper straw shapes recall natural straw.

Many groups take the responsibility of doing a culturally themed tree, says Porth. Twelve women from the Hana Community Center, an Asian American organization located on Chicago's North Side, create intricate paper ornaments for a tree each year. The paper ornaments are unique and are traditionally hung to welcome Santa Haraboji, or Santa Grandfather, each year. Students taking French at River Forest High School in Indiana have taken on the task of creating a French-themed tree each year.

2025 White House Historical Association ornament

Different materials, themes

The materials used to make ornaments are also fascinating, according to Porth. Even if a country does not practice the tradition of putting a Christmas tree in its homes, its people can still participate in the event by displaying ornaments showcasing crafts from their country.

"The tree from the Republic of Kenya has cars made out of metal frames and bottle caps. They are really cool," he notes.

Another crowd favorite is the tree themed for the United States, which features a bald Eagle on top and wood ornaments for each state. "People stand at the tree to look for their state ornament," says Porth. "It is like a map of the country."

Some families have continued to decorate trees for years. "One Puerto Rican family that has done a tree for years just added two dolls representing their mother and father, who started the tradition," says Porth. Some families travel from as far away as Japan to put up a tree each year.

Today's ornaments often chronicle history, notes Porth. Ornaments sporting presidents' photos, movie heroes or video game icons abound. In this manner, ornaments can go from mere decorations to artifacts reflecting the interests of many ages.

Six small businesses to shop this merry season

The gifting season is here. This year, consider supporting a few of Chicago's standout small businesses. From luxurious candles to elevated kitchenware, hand-crafted jewelry, and timeless clothing, there's something for everyone on your list.

Hazel Chicago
1835 W. Montrose Ave., Chicago
773-769-2227
hazelchicago.com

Hazel Chicago is a pair of thoughtfully curated boutiques offering an artful mix of gifts, home goods and apparel. The gift shop showcases distinctive cards, housewares and accessories from independent designers, while the apparel store features men's and women's clothing across a range of styles and sizes.

This holiday season, Hazel highlights its collection of hand-blown glass ornaments and tree toppers from Poland's Huras family. Each piece is coated in sterling silver and delicately hand-painted, reflecting the joy and childlike wonder of the Christmas season. Prices range from $42 to $110.

Hudson Grace
339 Park Ave., Glencoe
847-557-0599
hudsongracesf.com

Tucked away in the enchanting village of Glencoe, this charming home interior store is known for its selection of entertaining essentials, home decor and, of course, an expertly curated gift section.

A peek inside its holiday gift guide feels special — with gorgeous serveware for the host or decadent gifts for the food lovers, like holiday chocolates and olive oil sets. This year, the mixologist will love the classic bar tools, the wine enthusiast will appreciate a new decanter, and the homebody will treasure a candle and match set that's perfect for display.

For an extra personal and meaningful touch, the store offers handwritten notes, ensuring each gift is handled and arrives with care.

Humboldt House
1045 N. California Ave., Chicago
312-785-1442
humboldthouseco.com

A vibrant, thoughtfully curated home-goods and lifestyle boutique in the Humboldt Park neighborhood, Humboldt House is the go-to spot for playful gifts, apothecary goods, hand-crafted jewelry and more.

This year, the store is featuring "The Ornament Shop," with hundreds of different ornaments to choose from. According to the team, their holiday cabana striped candles have been flying out the door, and if you're looking to gift something small, opt for a cashmere bandana or cute ruffled socks.

From Nov. 24 to 25, take 20% off and receive a complimentary in-store gift. Enjoy free shipping on Cyber Monday.

The Cottage
131 W. Wesley St., Wheaton
thecottagegeneva.com

Originating in Geneva, but now located in Wheaton, the Cottage is a curated shop that offers everything for the season, including holiday decor, gifts, and gourmet food and wine, making it the perfect one-stop destination for festive shopping. Whether you're gathering dips and crackers for a holiday charcuterie board or selecting new ornaments for the tree, the store transforms each year into a winter wonderland. The beloved annual holiday party has become a tradition customers look forward to all year long.

Some of the shop's most popular items include small holiday prints and the line of olive oils and vinegars from Fustini's, for which they're proud to be the only Illinois retailer.

Milk Handmade
5137 N. Clark St., Chicago
773-234-7053
milkhandmade.com

If you're looking for the sustainability-minded person in your life, head over to Milk Handmade in Uptown. The shop showcases a curated selection of independent designers and artisans committed to local production, ethical craftsmanship, and eco-friendly practices.

This holiday, stop in for their Merino Shibori Sweater. Hand-dyed with the traditional Japanese shibori technique, each 100% extra-fine merino wool sweater is uniquely patterned. The wool is cruelty-free, Oeko-Tex 100 certified, organic and fully biodegradable.

From Nov. 27 to Nov. 29, for every $50 you spend in-store or online on Thanksgiving through Small Business Saturday, you will receive a $10 gift card that you can use during the month of January. Or stop in Dec. 12 for Late Night Andersonville. Shop Milk in person until 8 p.m., with special treats and promos available in-store only.

Jayson Home
1885 N. Clybourn Ave., Chicago
773-248-8180
jaysonhome.com

The Lincoln Park design services studio knows a thing or two about beautiful homes — and the beautiful pieces that fill them. This year, their online shop features a little something for every type of homeowner, including gifts for the host, the naturalist, the artist, trendsetter and more.

The holiday shop is filled with fun gifts like luxurious bath flakes, quality heirloom pancake mix, and craft cocktail mixes and syrups. Or you can go for something personal, like a moniker scarf with a custom monogram or a monogrammed magnifier.

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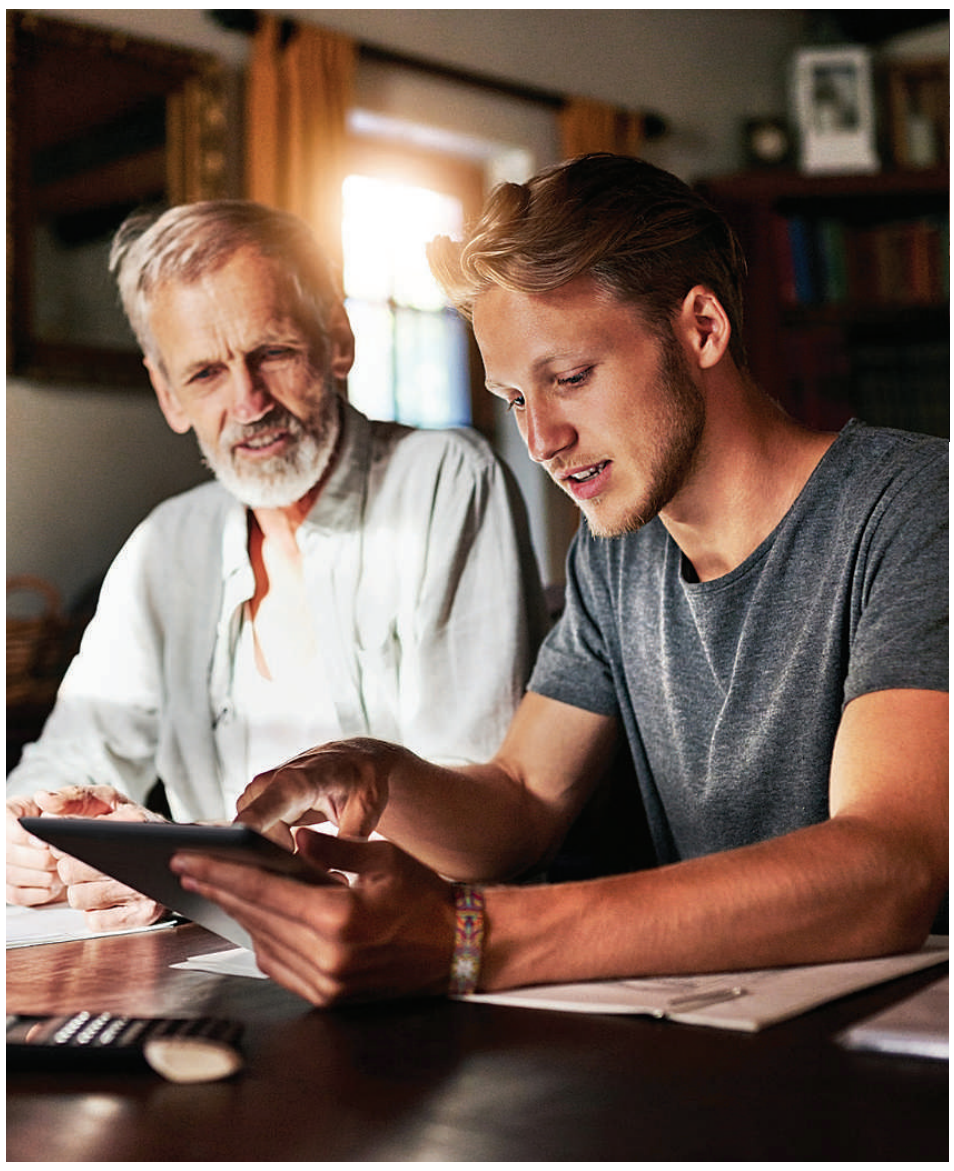

'Tis the season for needed family money talks

Many may find a significant discussion about family finances at the holidays as welcome as last year's leftover fruitcake. But several financial experts say the holidays are precisely the time to consider launching into these family conversations.

"It's not a good time to dig deep, but it is a good time to open up the can of worms, in addition to the cranberries," says Joy Loverde, Chicago-based author of "The Complete Elder Care Planner, 4th Edition." "At holidays, all the key stakeholders will be trapped and possibly snowed in. So yeah, when else does this happen?"

Michelle Griffith, senior wealth advisor, Citi Personal Wealth Management with Citi Wealth in Chicago, also believes this is an opportune time to open up.

"It can be done any time, but the holidays are a special time because families come together," she says. "And people are more open around the holidays to having conversations. Those traditional times make this a good time."

In many families, these conversations need to take place, and shouldn't be delayed, adds Anthony Pellegrino, principal and founder with Goldstone Financial Group, Oakbrook Terrace. "Waiting until your health is compromised or you have a negative financial situation, then it may be too late," he says, for the family money talk.

Setting rules

"When it's decided the talk will take place, let everyone know well in advance it will happen," says Suzanne Wychocki, licensed clinical social worker in Chicago. "Talk of money can evoke many emotions, and surprising someone with a conversation about inheritances and life transitions needs to be handled gently," she says.

Create a loose outline of what will be discussed in the conversation, setting boundaries around the conversation so it stays on topic, Griffith advises.

Start the discussion slowly, allowing each family member to both speak and listen, Wychocki says. Also, keep in mind that each family member's emotional capacity to handle this conversation may be different. "If some members get overwhelmed or have oversized feelings during these conversations, there should be an option to step out and regroup without shame or punishment," she adds.

Parents should not feel pressurized to answer questions they were not expecting to be asked, Griffith says. "It's totally okay to say, 'Great question, I'll get back to you on that,' rather than answer on the spot," she says. "This is a thoughtful conversation."

The key is to have an open discussion, and avoid speeches or lectures, Griffith and Wychocki both emphasize. "Remember, no matter how genuine the intent of the conversation is, being supportive and helpful is important," the latter says. "Every family member brings their own money scripts, emotions and expectations into the room."

One more ground rule is to ensure the tete-a-tete doesn't involve alcohol. "Conversations about death and money mix poorly with spiked eggnog," Loverde says.

Topics covered

The talk might begin with a question of whether key documents exist. These would include powers of attorney for health and property, insurance policies, deeds to the house, and title to the car. "I call it the paperwork scavenger hunt," Loverde says.

Discuss how family members would access a loved one's phone, calendar or computer to ensure key information continues to be addressed, and how passwords are kept safe so family needs to get them, they can do so if family needs arise, she adds.

A critical discussion point should be long-term care, which too often is delayed until an older family member has a stroke or develops dementia, Pellegrino says. If one of the grown children is the power of attorney, let each son and daughter know of that choice.

"The best way is to draw up a trust and have that mapped out in writing, but I think verbalizing that in front of all children is best so everyone is on the same page," he says. "Many times, the parents have a life insurance policy with a long-term care rider. And without a conversation about that rider, children may assume the policy was only providing benefits after death, when it was there for living purposes as well."

If possible, older people should discuss their retirement planning with their offspring. "I've seen situations where people got behind on income and didn't pay their property tax bill," Pellegrino says. "Someone could pay that and acquire the property. (You should) let your spouse and your children know that you are on track for your retirement."

One more area of emphasis should be estate and legacy planning. One of Pellegrino's friends was concerned enough about this topic that he included his estate attorney, financial advisor and family in a mock "post-death" estate meeting. He sat in the back of the room and remarked, "You can't talk to me. I'm dead."

The meeting was held. "Afterwards, he deconstructed the meeting and provided guidance and direction because he saw things that were missed, which he felt were imperative to be discussed at that meeting," Pellegrino says.

Finally, if a talk can't be undertaken, older family members should ensure their wishes are in writing in estate plans, trusts, wills, powers of attorney and health care directives, Griffith says. "That keeps the family in love when the loved one leaves," she says. "You don't have any guesswork, because everything has been written down."

Adds Pellegrino: "When families prepare together, they protect more than their assets. They're protecting their relationships, their time and their peace of mind."

Family talk dos and don'ts

Do:

- Inform members of meeting and create rough outline in advance
- Discuss only what's necessary
- Stress open communication
- Avoid alcohol
- Respect different family members' emotions, money scripts

Don't:

- Lecture
- Engage in sibling rivalry
- Spring heavy money discussions on unsuspecting participants
- Tie the conversation to gifts or expectations
- Celebrate one offspring while shaming another

Hot chocolate, German food and crafts, and crisp air make Christmas shopping merry and bright at Christkindlmarkets.

TRADITIONS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

each weighing more than two tons, and symbolizing strength, courage, and protection — standing watch over the city's art and people.

Since the early 1990s, however, the day after Thanksgiving marks a special time when the lions receive large, custom-made evergreen wreaths, sized to fit around their necks and withstand the Chicago winter. The Institute's Grounds Department begins work weeks ahead of the ceremony, designing the shape and size of the wreaths, ordering or prepping the greenery, lighting, harnessing materials, and rigging equipment.

The ceremony often features additional festivities, with live performances by the Joffrey Ballet, complimentary hot chocolate, and family-friendly activities at the museum's Ryan Learning Center. The wreaths typically stay on display through early January, when they're removed and the materials composted or recycled.

Christkindlmarkets

Inspired by the centuries-old German Christmas market tradition, Chicago holds its own outdoor holiday market each year. The first Christkindlmarket was held in 1996 at Pioneer Court, but in 1997 it moved to its more familiar home in the Loop at Daley Plaza (111 S. State St.) and has remained there for the central downtown edition.

The Dancing Walnuts from a scene in the Joffrey Ballet's "The Nutcracker." (Katie Miller)

Today, it has become one of the largest Christmas markets in the U.S., and a significant holiday destination for Chicago locals and tourists.

With traditional German and Alpine fare served, like sausages, potato pancakes, and gingerbread, visitors can wander among the vendor booths while sipping signature drinks, like imported German mulled wine, Glühwein — served hot, spiced with cinnamon, cloves, and star anise, and in a collectible souvenir mug.

The market has since expanded to other locations, including RiverEdge Park in Aurora and Gallagher Way in Wrigleyville.

'The Nutcracker'

The holidays wouldn't be complete without catching Joffrey Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker," the iconic story of a young girl whose toy nutcracker comes to life on Christmas Eve, leading her on a dreamlike journey through a magical world.

The first full-length "Nutcracker" ballet performed in Chicago was presented by the Ruth Page Ballet in 1965, and it quickly became an annual holiday tradition in the city. Page's "Nutcracker" continued to run for more than three decades, becoming a hallmark of Chicago's holiday arts scene.

Following the retirement of the Ruth Page production, the Joffrey Ballet debuted its own version in 1987, choreographed by company co-founder Robert Joffrey, and its "The Nutcracker" has been the city's premier production since. In December 2016, the Joffrey Ballet premiered an all-new "The Nutcracker," set in Chicago in 1892 during preparations for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, rather than in the traditional 19th-century European setting, and features a narrative centered around a working-class immigrant family. This production remains the version performed today and continues to use Tchaikovsky's original score.

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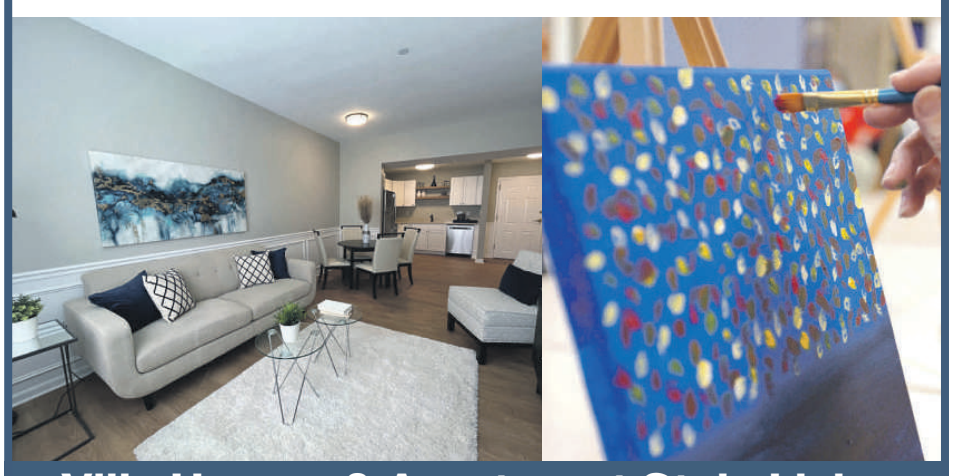

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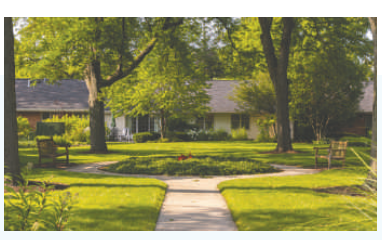

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LIFE PLAN COMMUNITY

Break time | Bond with the grandkids during their school time out and have some fun

The upcoming holiday break is a great time for families to catch up, especially with the grandkids.

Whether you're babysitting while your adult children are at work or you're looking for ideas on ways to spend a day with the family, here are some suggestions of things to do with your grandchildren.

Whip up a meal

Making family dinner together is a fun way to bond and get the grandkids off their devices for a bit. It can also be an opportunity to share a piece of your family history by preparing a family favorite holiday dish or making a recipe you enjoyed with your own grandparents.

There are plenty of opportunities for kids of all ages to contribute to a meal. Younger kids can help with simple tasks such as washing produce or stirring ingredients. For older kids, consider having them prepare a side dish or dessert on their own with supervision as needed.

Another option is doing your own version of a chef competition. Have everyone make the same dish. Then let other family members sample the dishes and crown a winner.

Work on Scout badges

If you're an expert in a field or have a cherished hobby, you're probably in a good position to help your grandchild earn badges for Scouts. Girl Scout and Scouting BSA badges offer kids an opportunity to explore interests and learn new skills. Badges in both organizations cover a wide range of topics from civic government and weather to chess and wood carving.

Calvin Petersen makes a cherry-filled pastry dessert with his grandmother Georgia Petersen.

For a complete listing of badges, visit girlscoutshop.com/badges-program for Girl Scouts and scouting.org/skills/merit-badges for Scouting BSA. Then see if there are any topics in your area of expertise where you can help your grandchildren with these badges.

Share a hobby

Try sharing your own hobbies and interests. Starting a sewing project, like making a blanket, is one way to create cherished memories together. If you need a holiday gift idea, consider purchasing The Woobles — fun crochet kits for beginners that come in kid-friendly designs like animals and foods. Other fun hobbies to try together include photography, painting, making arts and crafts, dancing and assembling puzzles.

On the flip side, take time to get to know your grandchildren's hobbies and interests as well. Perhaps they could demonstrate the STEM activities they do in school or teach you how to dive into the world of social media.

Visit a local bookstore

Help instill a love of reading by stopping by a local bookstore. Three Stories Bookstore in Lemont prides itself on helping young readers find the perfect book, whether it's a popular series like "Dog Man" books or the latest novel written by local authors.

Youngsters will enjoy visiting the children's room at Harvey's Tales in Geneva as well as checking out the store's selection of toys and puzzles. Anderson's Bookshop, with locations in Naperville and Downers Grove, also features a selection of books and toys to captivate young readers.

Take a hike

Summer isn't the only season to get some tree time in nature. Waterfall Glen Forest Preserve in Darien features a popular hiking route that includes a dam, a unique waterfall and a ravine. The Morton Arboretum in Lisle offers miles of trails perfect for taking in the views of nature year-round. Youngsters can learn more about nature through programs at Hickory Knolls Discovery Center in St. Charles before heading off to explore their trails on their own.

If you're up for a road trip, check out Eagle Watch Weekend Jan. 24 to 25 at Starved Rock. Typically held in late January, this two-day family event at Starved Rock State Park celebrates the American Bald Eagle in Illinois. Visit starvedrocklodge.com for the full schedule of events.

Millennium Park lights up for a winter evening skate in downtown Chicago.

Go ice skating

Another fun outdoor winter activity is ice skating. For many families, going to the ice skating rink at Millennium Park in downtown Chicago has become a beloved family tradition. Open 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily through February 2026 (weather permitting), ice skating is free if you bring your own skates. Free skating lessons are offered from 9 to 10 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

Out in the suburbs, new this year is The Rink at Block59 in Naperville. Open through Jan. 18, this new outdoor ice skating experience offers festive fun for the whole family. Tickets are for one-hour or 45-minute sessions. Skates can be rented for an additional charge.

Volunteer together

The holiday season is a good time to demonstrate the value of giving back to others. And there are plenty of ways to volunteer with your grandchildren. Families with children ages 5 and up can work together as a team to hand-pack nutritious MannaPack® meals at Feed My Starving Children. To sign up for a shift, visit fmsc.org/get-involved/volunteer then select a location near you for available times.

Families can help sort and bag donated books for children at Bernie's Book Bank in Lake Bluff. Visit berniesbookbank.org, for more information.

Local animal shelters, such as PAWS Chicago, can use help with animal care and adoption events. For more information, go to pawschicago.org.

See a show

If one of your favorite holiday traditions is snuggling up on the couch watching Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye in the movie "White Christmas," consider taking the grandkids to check out the iconic holiday production of "Irving Berlin's White Christmas" at the Paramount Theatre in Aurora. Enjoy the epic dance numbers, spectacular costumes and a finale rendition of "White Christmas." The production runs through Jan. 11. For show times and tickets, visit paramountaurora.com.

Ring in the noon year

For young revelers who can't stay awake until midnight, several places offer family-friendly ways to ring in the new year long before midnight. Funway in Batavia offers a variety of party options, including a skate party, bowling party and a countdown party complete with unlimited skating, bowling, laser tag, bumper cars, mini golf and arcade fun. For more information, visit funway.com.

Many local libraries and park districts host countdowns to noon, such as the Fox Valley Park District's Family New Year's Eve Bash, where party goers can bounce in inflatables, play games, participate in interactive entertainment and dance to music. Visit foxvalleyparkdistrict.org for more information. The Chicago Public Library offers games and fun while waiting to count down to noon at its Noon Year's Eve Party. For more information, visit chipublib.bibliocommons.com/events.

Inspired holiday entertaining

The holiday season is a time for creating meals and memories that last a lifetime, but it's also one of the busiest times of the year.

In the blur of commitments, crowded schedules and endless prep, the tension between a desire to create magical meals and wanting to actually enjoy them is real.

For the chef on your list, the right cookware can help shift that balance. Inspired by the calming essence of the outdoors, the KitchenAid Evergreen Design Series brings a breath of fresh air into the kitchen.

Including 12 pieces, the Hard-Anodized Ceramic Induction Nonstick Cookware Set brings nature into the kitchen with deep forest-green hues and bronze handles. Versatile for stove-to-oven-to-table cooking, the high-performance ceramic nonstick cookware has forged bases for fast, even heating. Shatter-resistant glass lids seal in heat, lock in flavor and allow easy monitoring.

When spending many special evenings around the table during the holiday season, these tools can help streamline the cooking process whether you need a dish that can be made in advance and frozen for easy entertaining like this Homemade Pumpkin Ravioli with White Wine and Herb Butter Sauce or one that lets you focus on the fun and celebrations even with guests in town, such as Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese with Bacon.

Find more recipes and tools to bring culinary inspiration to life during the holidays at kitchenaid.com.

Family Features

Homemade Pumpkin Ravioli with White Wine and Herb Butter Sauce

Recipe courtesy of Marge Perry and David Bonom
Servings: 4

Ravioli:

- 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin puree
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1/3 cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese, plus additional for serving (optional)
- 2 tablespoons plain dried bread crumbs
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 pinch ground nutmeg
- 48 round or square dumpling wrappers
- water

Sauce:

- 6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, divided
- 1/3 cup chopped shallots
- 2/3 cup dry white wine
- 3 tablespoons heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

To make ravioli: Line fine mesh sieve with dampened cheesecloth. Add pumpkin puree and strain 1 hour. Transfer to bowl and stir in egg, cheese, breadcrumbs, sugar, salt and nutmeg.

Arrange six dumpling wrappers on work surface in single layer. Place 1 tablespoon pumpkin mixture in center of each and brush edges with water. Place second wrapper over filling, carefully pushing out any air bubbles then pressing edges to seal.

Transfer ravioli to baking sheet covered with parchment paper. Place sheet of plastic wrap over ravioli. Repeat with remaining wrappers and filling.

In KitchenAid Evergreen Design Series 6-Quart Ceramic Stockpot over medium heat, bring salted water to a gentle simmer

To make sauce: in a 3-Quart Ceramic Saucepan over medium-high heat, melt 1 tablespoon butter. Add shallots and cook, stirring occasionally, 1 minute. Add wine, bring to boil and cook until mixture resembles wet sand, 8-9 minutes.

Reduce heat to medium-low and whisk in remaining butter and heavy cream until melted. Stir in sage, chives and salt; keep warm, stirring occasionally.

To cook ravioli, add half to simmering water and cook, stirring gently once or twice, 3 minutes. Remove with slotted spoon and divide between two plates. Add remaining ravioli to pot and repeat dividing between remaining plates. Spoon sauce over ravioli and serve with additional grated cheese, if desired.

Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese with Bacon

- 8 ounces elbow macaroni
- 6 slices center-cut bacon
- 1 onion, chopped
- 5 cups butternut squash, cubed
- 3 1/2 cups chicken broth, divided
- 3/4 cup low-fat milk
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 1 pinch salt, plus additional, to taste, divided
- 1 pinch pepper, plus additional, to taste, divided
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded, divided
- chopped parsley (optional)

In a 6-quart stockpot, cook macaroni noodles according to package instructions. Set aside.

In a 5-quart saute pan, cook bacon until crisp. Chop and set aside.

In same pan, add chopped onion and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until pieces are soft and lightly caramelized.

Add butternut squash cubes to onions along with 2 cups chicken broth. Cover and bring to boil. Reduce heat and cook until squash is soft and most liquid is reduced.

Pour squash and onions into bowl and add milk, remaining chicken broth, dry mustard, nutmeg and pinch of salt and pepper. Using a KitchenAid stand mixer, puree mixture until smooth and creamy.

Pour pureed sauce into saute pan. Over low heat, add Parmesan cheese and 3/4 cup sharp cheddar cheese a little at a time, stirring constantly. Add noodles and stir well.

Add salt and pepper, to taste. Top with chopped bacon, remaining cheese and chopped parsley, if desired.

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PRIMETIME

The Salvation Army depends on volunteers like Cindy Evans, and some paid staff, for its annual Red Kettle Campaign fundraiser.

SOMEONE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the past three years, she has been stationed in front of the Danada Square Jewel with her kettle and bell. "She shows up in costume and brings a little tree and puts the Salvation Army apron on the tree," says Cathleen Himes, Resource Development Director for the Oakbrook Terrace Salvation Army. "She volunteered an amazing 170 hours last year."

"I always wear a costume. Some I have made and some I have bought," says Evans. "I have an elf, a snowman, the Grinch, a tin soldier and a reindeer. I always bring my own decorated tree too. I dance the entire time and play Christian music. Sometimes I help people cross the street. I meet so many interesting people. It really is rewarding. More people should try ringing the bell and impacting people's lives."

Critical campaign

Himes explains that the Red Kettle campaign is a "critical part of our funding.

"At the Oakbrook Terrace location, we help about 25,000 people from the Western suburbs. In all of Chicagoland, the Salvation Army is helping about a million people a year. And if we had more funds, we could help even more," she says.

Getting volunteer bell ringers is always a challenge, so the Salvation Army does hire some ringers. "Part of our ministry is to have paid ringers each year. We find people who are homeless or out of work and give them training, transportation, breakfast, lunch and a fair wage. After six weeks are up, we can also give them a job recommendation if they did well," says Himes.

"We make the most funds with volunteer ringers," continues Himes. She tries to appeal to high school clubs, Boy Scout troops and churches to become volunteer bell ringers. An average shift is two hours. Some companies will pick a day as a public service project for their employees who man the kettles during the day. Many volunteers agree to ring once a week for two hours and others just volunteer for one shift. To learn more about volunteering or to sign up for a shift, visit registertoring.com.

Helping others

Evans is ringing her bell again this year. "My favorite holiday isn't Christmas," she notes. "My favorite holiday is Thanksgiving because it is good to be grateful for all that we have and be ready to share with others."

Evans is reaching beyond the Red Kettle Campaign and is working on "a farm for felons," a place where ex-convicts can find housing, food and work. Her only son is currently in prison and she knows what a struggle he will face. She wants to help other felons turn their lives around.

"I have never met anyone like Tina," says Himes. "She is a mother, a grandmother, a Realtor. She is even an actress," referring to Evan's work as an extra on "Chicago PD" and "Chicago Med." "She inspires me to do even more."

Evans challenges others to volunteer for the Red Kettle Campaign and to give generously when they can. She even has some tales of secret treasures to share.

"I got one gold coin the first year, three in the second year and one in the third year. I think they are all from the same guy. When you give, you impact lives," she says with conviction. "Just ask yourself, whose life will I change today?"

In the beginning

The Red Kettle campaign was started in 1891 by Salvation Army Captain Joseph McFee, who was discouraged by his inability to feed the hungry in San Francisco. He recalled being a sailor visiting Stage Landing in Liverpool, England. The docks there had a large kettle known as "Simpson's Pot" where people tossed coins to help feed the poor.

The campaign fed thousands, so McFee decided to try the same idea in San Francisco and successfully raised much-needed funds. The tradition has grown and continued since that time.

"But donations have gone down every year," says Cathleen Himes, Salvation Army Oakbrook Terrace. "COVID hurt us and then the economy hurt us. We could help so many more if we had more to give."

Regain your independence!

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CHICAGO MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON

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This program is **FREE** and available at no cost to you!

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Call 312-744-4016 or email
aging@cityofchicago.org
www.caregiverstressbusters.org

THE FOUR-SEASON CHALLENGE

A micro-adventure for each season of the year

Instead of making a long list of resolutions that are meant to transform your day-to-day life during the new year, try something different: a year of micro-adventures. Your one resolution can be to get out and explore the world while being active.

The benefits of this approach are numerous: you'll socialize, try new things, and get out of your comfort zone. Harvard Health includes "learning new things" as one of the six ways to shield your brain from decline as you age, so this resolution is a perfect way to combine fun goals with your mental and physical health.

Here are easy micro-adventures that you can enjoy during each season.

Winter adventures

Ice sculpting

See local talent up close by visiting a nearby ice sculpting demonstration during a town festival or competition. You'll get plenty of exercise walking around the venue while you admire the creativity and skill of the sculptors. Many events also have mini-classes and beginner's workshops where you can learn to sculpt with smaller tools — but be sure to leave the chainsaws to the professionals.

Snowshoeing treks

If you live near snow, head out for a snowshoeing adventure. Your local fitness clubs or outdoor gear stores will have guided hikes for beginners that stay on flat paths and don't go too far. You'll get to explore areas that aren't always accessible for walking during winter, see beautiful winter vistas and get a great workout.

Curling class

In warm or cold climates, an indoor curling class at your local ice rink is the perfect winter adventure. If you're unfamiliar with the sport, think shuffleboard on ice. Unlike skating, curling is an approachable activity for all ages. Wear clean, flat sneakers and get rubber grips to put on the bottom for stability when you arrive at the class. There are several roles on a curling team, so you'll have the flexibility to learn different skills and choose the one that meets your abilities.

Spring adventures

Wildflower walks

Learning about your local flora and fauna is a great way to enjoy nature while getting some exercise. Spring wildflowers are often hyperlocal, so learning to identify your local varieties is a great project. Search community classes from your botanic gardens, park districts and wildlife centers to see if they offer a guided wildflower identification walk.

Trail cleanup

As temperatures rise, it's time to maintain park and wilderness trails all over the country. Check with your local ranger stations and park districts to sign up for a trail maintenance crew. Every year, hundreds of volunteers clear debris, repaint signs, freshen trail markers and check for safety concerns along trails. You'll get fresh air, a good workout, and a sneak peek at your neighborhood wilderness waking up for the season.

Community garden clinic

Early spring is the best time to start prepping garden beds for the warmer months ahead. Check your local city events and botanic garden classes for a gardening clinic. Even if you already have the skills, working in a community garden will help prepare plots for the entire town to use or admire. You can start a compost pile, till the soil, rake leaves or help restore wildlife habitat areas like bee hotels.

Summer adventures

Evening paddleboarding

Evening is the best time to enjoy summer outside. If you live near a lake or pond, head to the water for an evening paddleboard with friends. Need instructions or gear? Your local park district or outdoor retailer should have rental equipment and a knowledgeable instructor.

Traveling museum exhibits

If you'd like to stay indoors during the hottest months, plan to visit a nearby museum that's hosting a traveling exhibit. These temporary installations are often full of world-class treasures and interactive elements, so plan for a full day.

Backroad stargazing

Clear summer nights are perfect for stargazing. Head out in the early evening to find a suitable location away from city lights to park. Spend some time walking around the area at dusk, enjoying the sunset and getting some exercise. When darkness falls, open up your camp chairs and enjoy the spectacular views.

Fall adventures

Corn maze walks

With both regular and "haunted" versions this time of year, you can never go wrong with a corn maze adventure. Many farms have several skill level paths to give you a challenge. Make sure to go with friends and have a warm apple cider along the way.

You-pick farms

Harvesting your own fruits and vegetables is a great way to learn about cultivating these crops. Find a local farm and fill your baskets with fresh produce. Then pick several new recipes to try that highlight these ingredients.

Harvest festivals

From local baking competitions to feats of strength, harvest festivals are the perfect way to meet new community members and get outside. Walk around the grounds and sample treats, watch a weaving demonstration, or get a chance to shear sheep yourself.

With a year of micro-adventures as your resolution, you'll be a more engaged, active community member for the upcoming seasons.

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WST: Winter SADness time

We are well into fall, on the cusp of winter, which means several things: less sunlight, shorter days and the arrival of the (sometimes stressful) holiday season. And that may bring on more episodes of seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

SAD is a real condition that can evolve into something more serious if left untreated. It's important to pay attention to the symptoms and not merely brush them off as "the winter blues," particularly if you already have a diagnosis of a mental health disorder. If you had it last year, odds are you'll be experiencing it again.

Seasonal affective disorder is not the same as clinical depression. If you felt great all summer but are starting to feel not so great as winter approaches, it's probably SAD. But if you feel this way year-round, you need to look into treatment for clinical depression.

SAD and depression share many of the same symptoms. Here are some of the most common:

- Changes in eating habits (eating more or not enough)
- Increased alcohol consumption
- Not being able to get out of bed
- Lack of motivation, feeling hopeless and/or helpless
- Problems focusing at work
- Loss of interest in socializing
- Household chores remaining undone (laundry, dishes, etc.)

These feelings may be transient, evaporating within a few days. But if they persist or keep recurring, it's time to ask your primary care provider about being screened for SAD. A physical exam should be part of a screening as well because symptoms can arise for a variety of health reasons related to hormones, medications, or a bacterial or viral infection.

> SAD seems to be more prevalent in women, with symptoms beginning in young adulthood.

Bonnie Lane

While anyone can develop SAD, some groups are more affected. Seniors with health issues or who live in social isolation are more at risk, and SAD can worsen feelings of isolation. Conversely, seniors who live in communities have a lower incidence of SAD because there are activities to keep them engaged after the sun goes down at 4:30 — movie night, bingo, communal meals.

SAD seems to be more prevalent in women, with symptoms beginning in young adulthood. Those with a personal or family history of mental health challenges, including major depressive disorder, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, may be at higher risk. Also, studies suggest that the farther you are from the equator, the higher the chances of SAD setting in.

Phototherapy, alone or in combination with therapy or medication, is recommended as first-line treatment for SAD. Phototherapy involves exposure to bright light with the use of a light box, which you can buy online for about $150. Getting outdoors in the morning sunlight for about 20 minutes can also help.

It's not completely understood why light therapy seems effective for many people. Researchers think it boosts serotonin, sometimes called the "happy chemical" because it increases feelings of calm, contentment and happiness. Exposure to certain light also has a positive effect on melatonin, a hormone that helps regulate the sleep-wake cycle. Better sleep can ease symptoms of SAD.

SAD may bring on thoughts like, "Everyone would be better off without me." Do not ignore those thoughts. If you or a loved one is in crisis, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. You can also call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988; veterans can reach specialized help at 998, press 1, or text 838255.

Don't retreat into feelings of helplessness and hopelessness this fall and winter. Understanding the symptoms of seasonal affective disorder — and knowing where to turn for help — are the first steps toward feeling better.

Bonnie Lane, M.S., is principal consultant with Family Support Services in Northbrook, specializing in supporting families whose loved ones suffer from severe mental illness or substance use disorder. Contact her at 847-651-1554 or bonnielane@thefamilysupportservices.com.

Chicago Tribune COMICS

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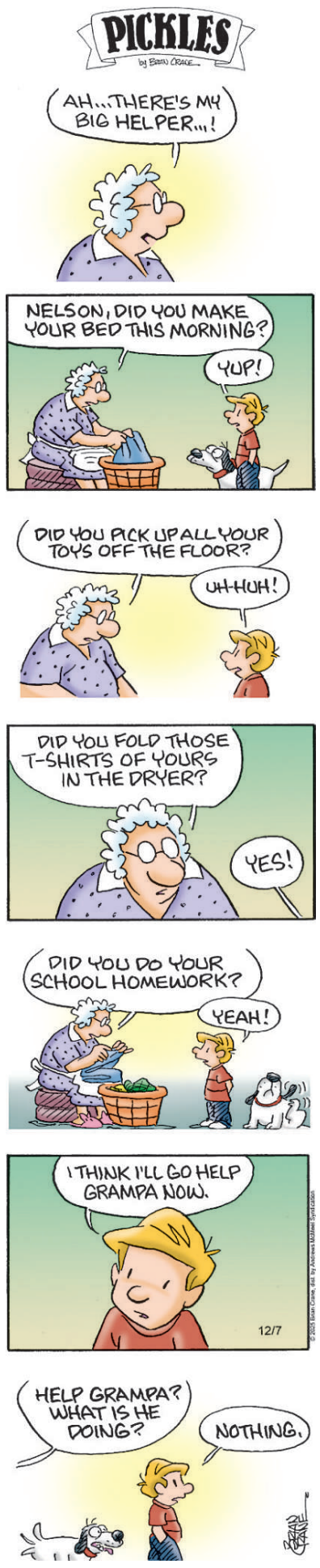
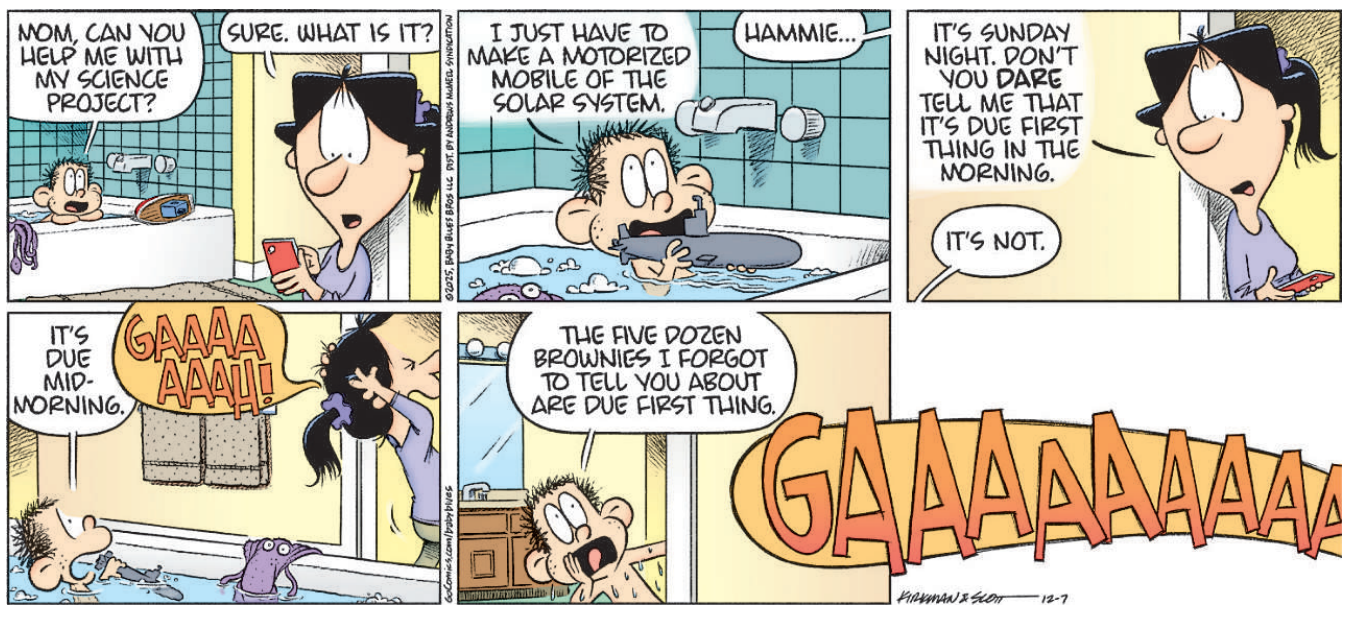
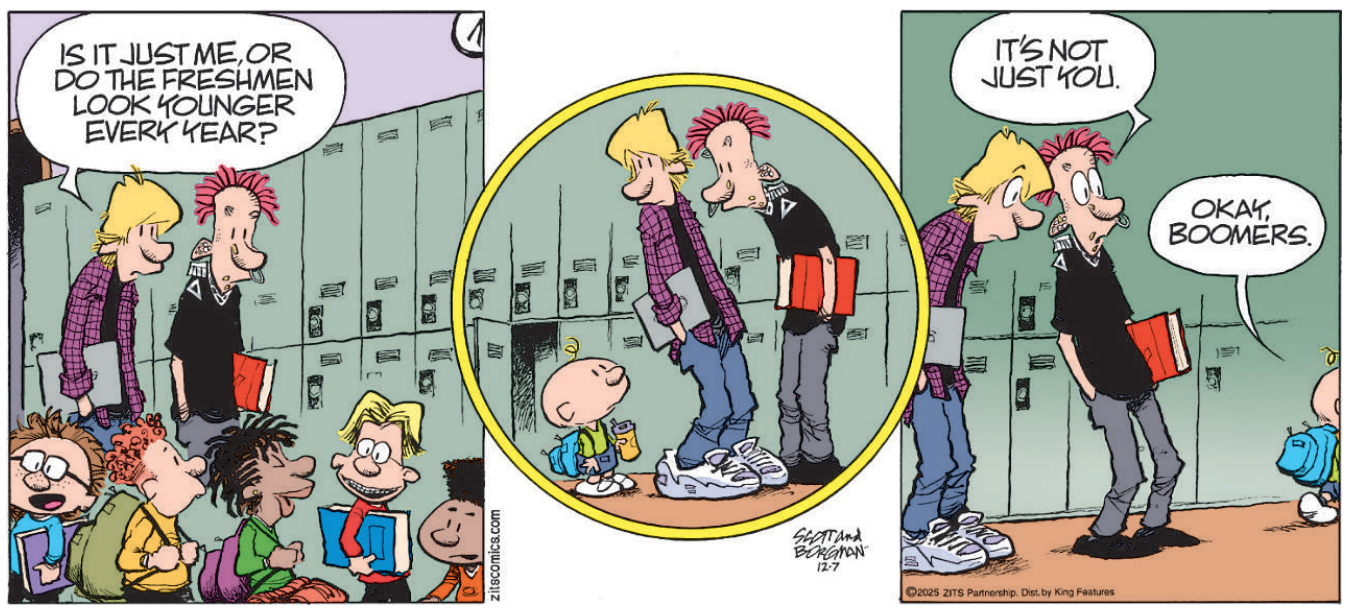
Pickles By Brian Crane


PICKLES
by Brian Crane
AH...THERE'S MY BIG HELPER...!
NELSON, DID YOU MAKE YOUR BED THIS MORNING?
YUP!
DID YOU PICK UP ALL YOUR TOYS OFF THE FLOOR?
UH-HUH!
DID YOU FOLD THOSE T-SHIRTS OF YOURS IN THE DRYER?
YES!
DID YOU DO YOUR SCHOOL HOMEWORK?
YEAH!
I THINK I'LL GO HELP GRAMPA NOW.
12/7
HELP GRAMPA? WHAT IS HE DOING?
NOTHING.

Baby Blues By Rick Kirkman and Jerry Scott


MOM, CAN YOU HELP ME WITH MY SCIENCE PROJECT?
SURE. WHAT IS IT?
I JUST HAVE TO MAKE A MOTORIZED MOBILE OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM.
HAMMIE...
IT'S SUNDAY NIGHT. DON'T YOU DARE TELL ME THAT IT'S DUE FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.
IT'S NOT.
IT'S DUE MID-MORNING.
GAAAAAAAH!
THE FIVE DOZEN BROWNIES I FORGOT TO TELL YOU ABOUT ARE DUE FIRST THING.
GAAAAAAAAAAAA
KIRKMAN & SCOTT 12-7

Zits By Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman


IS IT JUST ME, OR DO THE FRESHMEN LOOK YOUNGER EVERY YEAR?
IT'S NOT JUST YOU.
OKAY, BOOMERS.
SCOTT and BORGMAN 12-7
zitscomics.com
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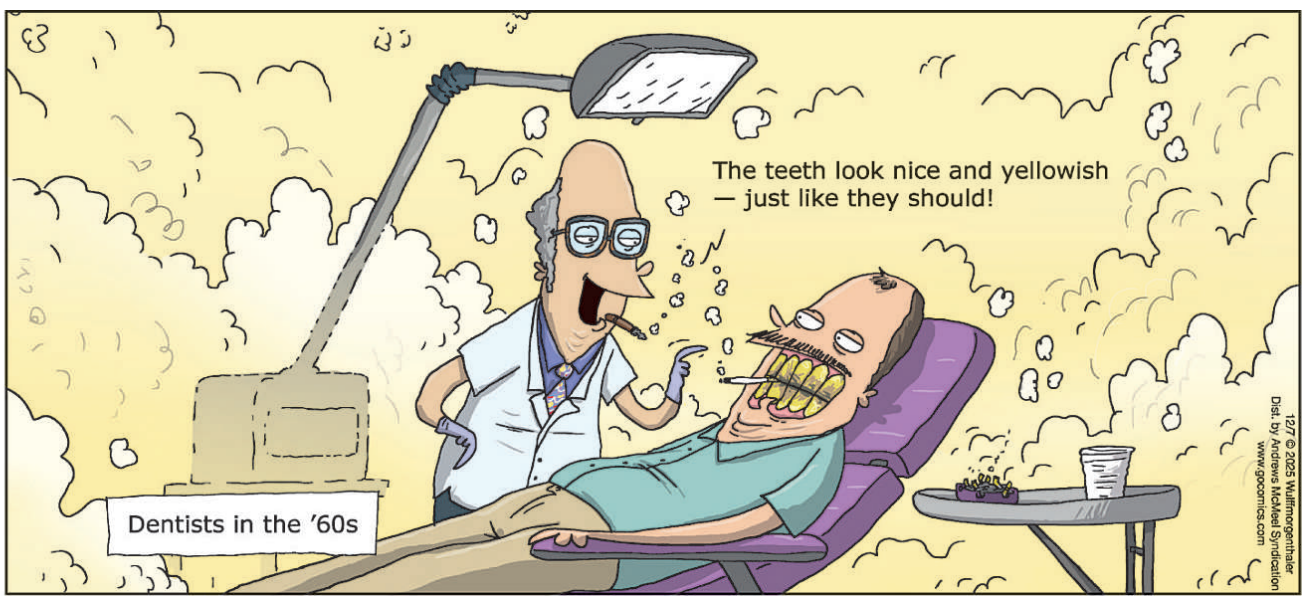
Grand Avenue By Mike Thompson

LET'S GO TO A SHOPPING MALL SO YOU CAN SIT ON SANTA'S LAP.
THAT'S A THING OF THE PAST.
IT'S A TRADITION!
MAYBE WITH YOUR GENERATION, BUT NOT OURS.
IT'LL BE FUN AND CREATE LASTING MEMORIES!
BUT NOBODY DOES THAT ANYMORE.
MANY KIDS STILL SIT ON SANTA'S LAP!
I'M TALKING ABOUT GOING TO A SHOPPING MALL.
12-7
©2025 Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication
THOMPSON

Wumo by Wulff & Morgenthaler


The teeth look nice and yellowish — just like they should!
Dentists in the '60s
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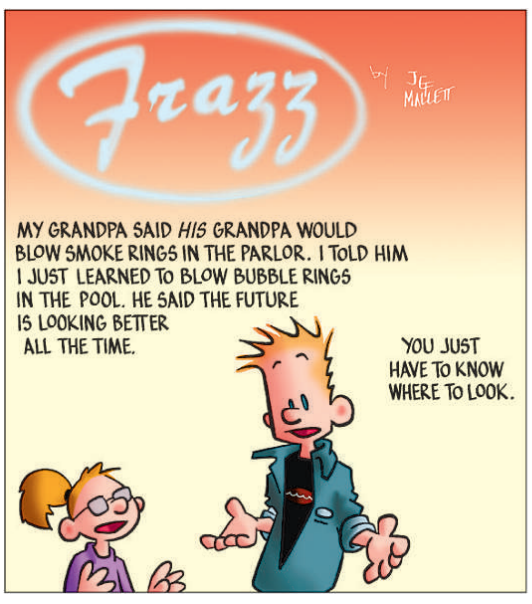
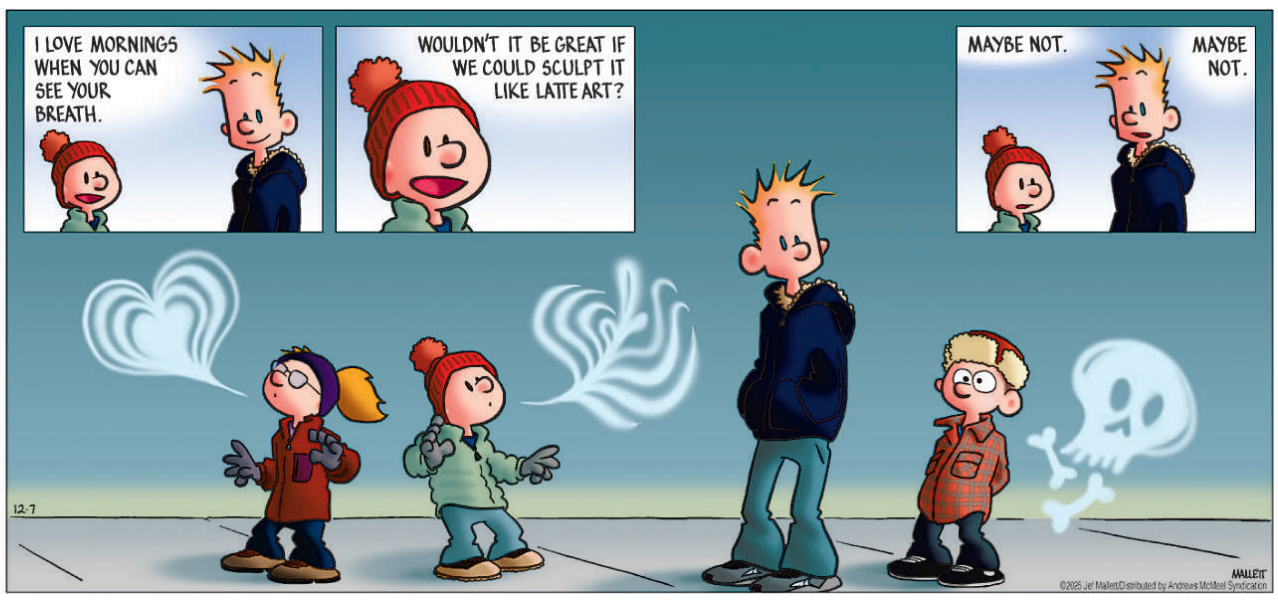
www.gocomics.com

Frazz by J.G. Mallett


Frazz
by J.G. MALLETT
MY GRANDPA SAID HIS GRANDPA WOULD BLOW SMOKE RINGS IN THE PARLOR. I TOLD HIM I JUST LEARNED TO BLOW BUBBLE RINGS IN THE POOL. HE SAID THE FUTURE IS LOOKING BETTER ALL THE TIME.
YOU JUST HAVE TO KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.


I LOVE MORNINGS WHEN YOU CAN SEE YOUR BREATH.
WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT IF WE COULD SCULPT IT LIKE LATTE ART?
MAYBE NOT.
MAYBE NOT.
12-7
©2025 Jef Mallett/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
MALLETT

Animal Crackers By Mike Osbun

ANIMAL CRACKERS
By Mike Osbun
YOU'VE REACHED SANTA'S HOTLINE LISTINGS...
YOU MIND HOLDING THIS FOR ME?
OSBUN 12-7
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ALL DONE!
WHERE DO YOU WANT ME TO PLUG THIS IN?
TRY ONE OF THE OTHER COMIC FEATURES.

For Better or for Worse

By Lynn Johnston

ELLY? CONNIE!
HI, PAMELA!
LOOK AT YOU WITH ALL OF YOUR PARCELS! - I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE NOT FINISHED YET!!
I HAVE ALL OF MY CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DONE BY OCTOBER AND WRAPPED BY THE FIRST OF DECEMBER.
MY CARDS ARE DONE, AND MY CHRISTMAS DINNER IS IN THE FREEZER, ALL READY FOR THE HOLIDAYS!
WOW!
THAT'S WONDERFUL, PAMELA!
YES - I'M SO IMPRESSED!
WHY DO SOME PEOPLE GET READY FOR CHRISTMAS SO DARNED EARLY?!
...SO THEY CAN SPEND THE REST OF DECEMBER IRRITATING PEOPLE LIKE US.
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12-07 www.fborfw.com
LYNN

Mister Boffo

and his "Wonder Dog" Weederman

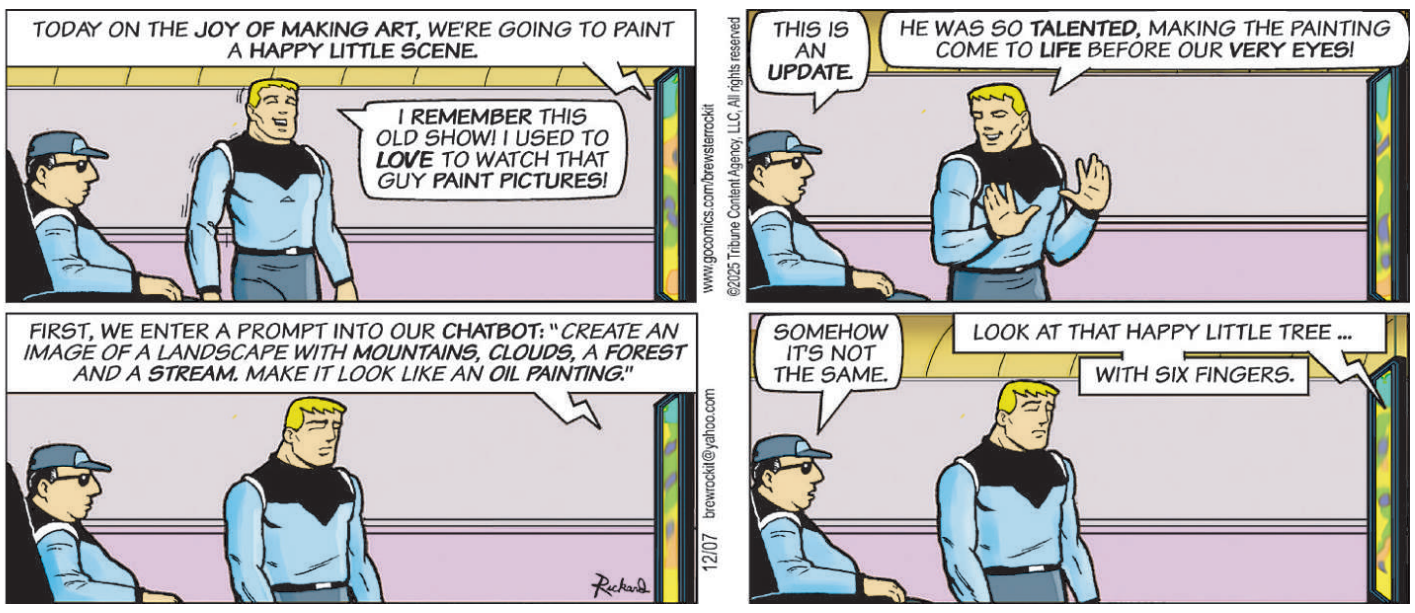
By Joe Martin

"TAKE WHAT YOU WANT, BUT SPEND WHAT YOU TAKE"
-CODE OF THE TRUSTAFARIAN-
ANOTHER WAY TO TELL WHEN YOU MAY NOT HAVE MARRIED THE FOCUSED DRIVEN, WORLD BEATER YOU THOUGHT
ME AND RILEY STARTED IN THE MAIL ROOM TOGETHER TWENTY YEARS AGO!
I'M STILL IN THE MAILROOM SORTING ENVELOPES...
WITH THE BOTTOM-FEEDERS...
WHILE HE'S LORDING IT OVER ME, OUT THERE IN THE WAREHOUSE, LOADING TRUCKS WITH THE BIG SHOT HOITY-TOITY SWELLS
ANIMATIONS/ARCHIVES AT MRBOFFO.COM
JOE MARTIN 12-7-25
2025 JoeMartin. Dist. By Hearst Chisel Features

Brewster Rockit

Space Guy!

By Tim Rickard


TODAY ON THE JOY OF MAKING ART, WE'RE GOING TO PAINT A HAPPY LITTLE SCENE.
I REMEMBER THIS OLD SHOW! I USED TO LOVE TO WATCH THAT GUY PAINT PICTURES!
THIS IS AN UPDATE.
HE WAS SO TALENTED, MAKING THE PAINTING COME TO LIFE BEFORE OUR VERY EYES!
FIRST, WE ENTER A PROMPT INTO OUR CHATBOT: "CREATE AN IMAGE OF A LANDSCAPE WITH MOUNTAINS, CLOUDS, A FOREST AND A STREAM. MAKE IT LOOK LIKE AN OIL PAINTING."
SOMEHOW IT'S NOT THE SAME.
LOOK AT THAT HAPPY LITTLE TREE ...
WITH SIX FINGERS.
www.gocomics.com/brewsterrockit
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12/07 brewrockit@yahoo.com
Rickard

Blondie

By Dean Young and John Marshall

OKAY! LET'S GET PUMPED UP FOR THE MAIN EVENT!!
BRING IT ON!!!
JIM'S GYM
THESE EXTREME EXERCISES WILL EQUIP YOU TO POWER SQUEEZE!
RRGH!
www.blondie.com
D'YA THINK I'LL BE READY IN TIME?! PANT! PANT!
MAYBE, IF YOU GIVE ME 210% ON THESE BICEP CURLS!
15 MORE MINUTES T'GO TH' DISTANCE!!!
© 2025 King Features Syndicate Inc. World Rights Reserved.
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN KEEP GOING, DEAR?!
12-7
BRING IT ON, HONEY! THIS YEAR I'M READY FOR YOU!!

Take It From the Tinkersons

By Bill Bettwy

FRANKIE, NO!
FRANKIE KEEPS EATING PINE NEEDLES AND DRINKING TREE WATER.
I THINK WE NEED TO GET RID OF THE TREE BEFORE HE GETS SICK.
NO, WE CAN'T GET RID OF THE TREE! WHERE WOULD SANTA PUT THE GIFTS?!
YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE A TREE FOR SANTA TO LEAVE GIFTS.
OH, THEN GET RID OF IT.
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BETTWY 12-7

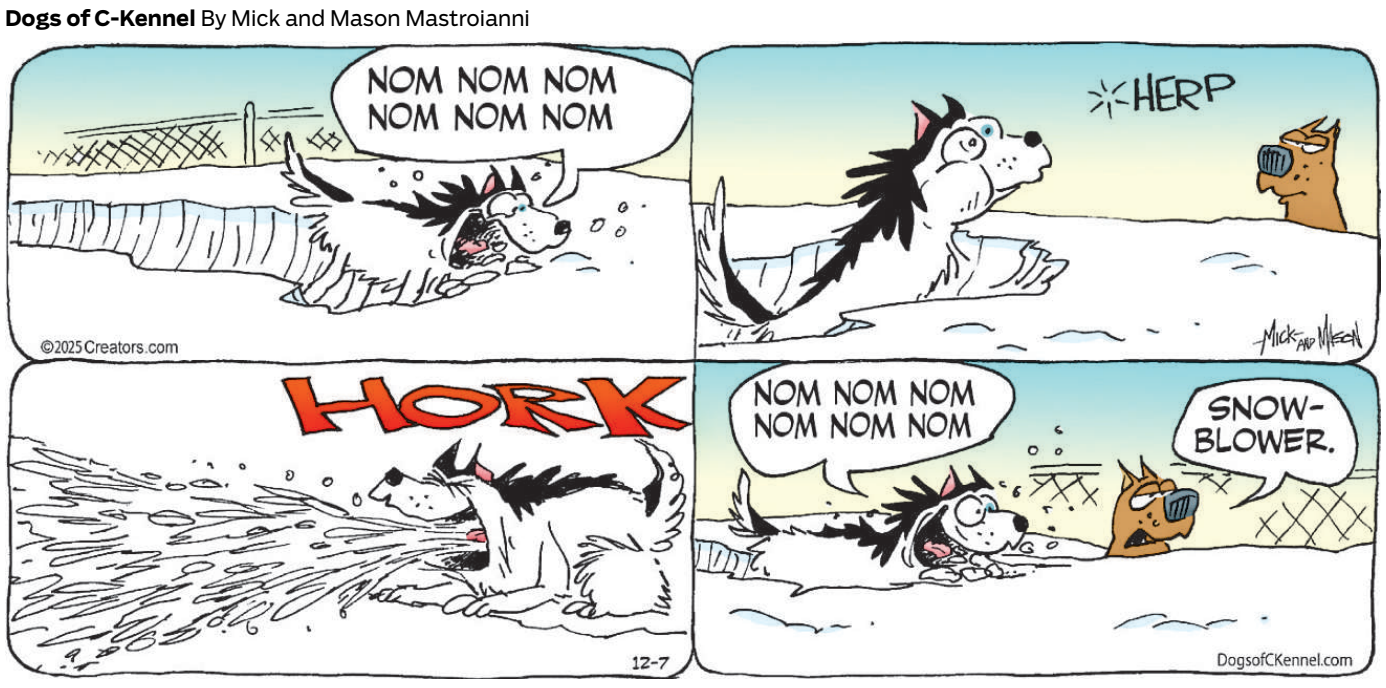
FoxTrot

By Bill Amend

ABOUT THE STAR YOU PUT ON TOP OF THE TREE...
IT'S STILL A LITTLE SMALL. OH, WELL.
©2025 Bill Amend / Dist. by Andrews McMeel
www.foxtrot.com @billamend.bsky.social
12-7
AMEND

Dogs of C-Kennel

By Mick and Mason Mastroianni



puzzle island

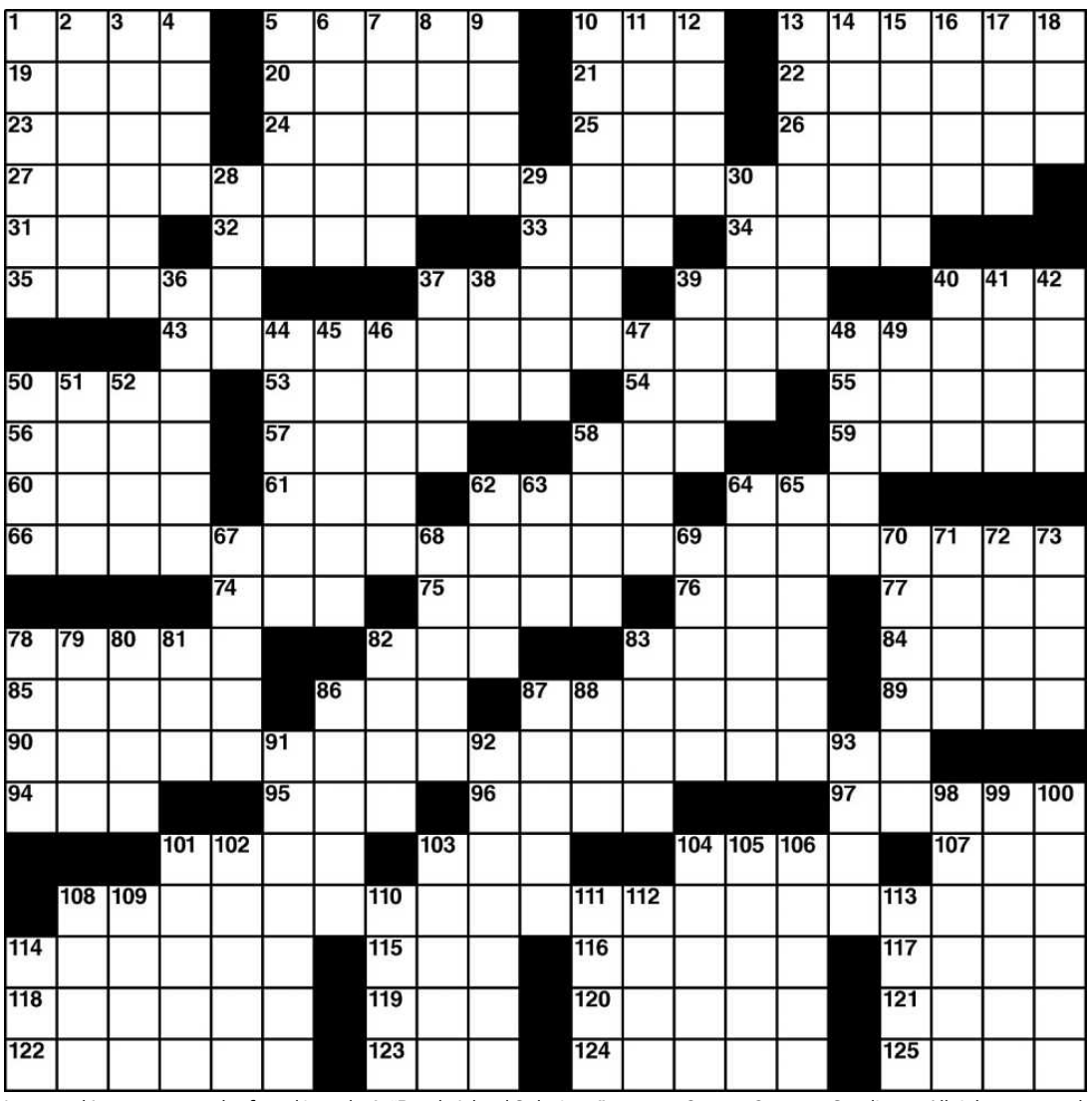
Scan QR code to play online.

For interactive puzzles and games go to **chicagotribune.com/games**

12/7

DIVERSE COLLECTIONS: Centrally located

By Mark McClain | Edited by Stanley Newman
(stanxwords.com)



Last week's answers can be found in today's "Puzzle Island Solutions." © 2025 Creators Syndicate. All rights reserved.

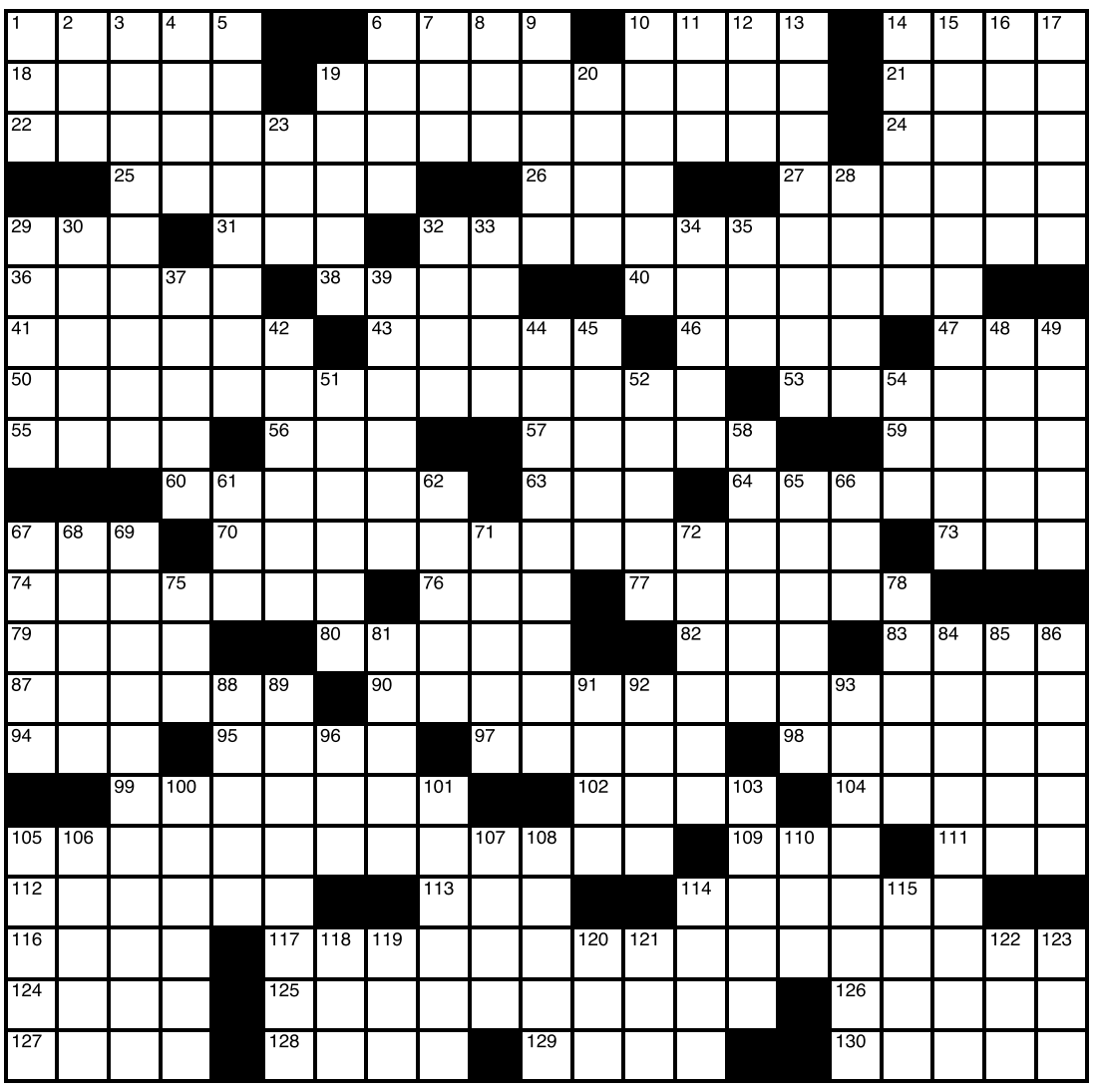
Across
1 See 115-Across
5 Greek stuffed grape leaf
10 Texter's "incidentally"
13 Brazilian dances
19 Historical stretches
20 Operatic deliveries
21 Leave amazed
22 Practical jokes
23 Irish county
24 Double Nobelist Pauling
25 Agent, briefly
26 Bit of legalese
27 Annual theater award
31 Disneyland's Main Street, __
32 Latvian capital
33 Atom with a charge
34 Laundry appliance
35 Inherently
37 "Billion" prefix
39 French article
40 A/C measure
43 Challenges for adolescents
50 Foreshadow
53 Sentence excerpt
54 Unconventional
55 Bring together
56 Frying medium
57 Arabian nation
58 Winter bug
59 Trimming tool
60 One grand, for short
61 Brief snooze
62 Watered-down
64 Prefix for point
66 Manufacturing coordination
74 Novelist Tan
75 Native Canadians
76 Taunting exclamation
77 Spanish love
78 Initially
82 Investment newsletter rating
83 MD's ASAP
84 Move higher
85 Beer from Japan
86 Puppy or parrot
87 Nothing more than
89 Mythical river
90 Football strategist
94 Mermaid's home
95 All-important
96 Years ago
97 Mr. Clean rival
101 So-so
103 List shortener
104 "Should that happen..."
107 Curator's deg.
108 Baseball's fall celebrators
114 Sentence ender
115 With 1-Across, fairly divided
116 Empathetic comment
117 Wetlands bird
118 Esoteric
119 Very long time span
120 Live it up
121 Diminutive ending
122 Closed in on
123 Ambulance destinations: Abbr.
124 Words of clarification
125 Get rid of

Down
1 Get back, as losses
2 Stir up
3 __ sauce (shrimp topping)
4 Calls (for)
5 The __ Lama
6 Faucet gasket
7 Stella McCartney's mom
8 Hawaiian island
9 Affinity grp.
10 Cake beside a sink
11 Pre-adolescent
12 Was in tears
13 Areas of knowledge
14 Childish comeback
15 County on San Francisco Bay
16 Rare blood type, for short
17 Similar (to)
18 Tax form no.
28 Ash or almond
29 Bach-era dance
30 Ate well
36 Accelerated
37 Mom's mom
38 Apple hardware platform
39 Pakistani language
40 Naval lockup
41 Parisian pate
42 __-friendly software
44 Word derived from a name
45 Department store founder
46 Pictorial chart
47 Oktoberfest music
48 Glove material
49 German conjunction
50 Crunchy sandwiches
51 Hawaiian island
52 Globule
58 Wide renown
62 Slender and strong
63 Compass reading
64 Hawaiian thanks
65 "Understood!"
67 Language of old Rome
68 Sharp, as eyesight
69 Potentially objectionable
70 Like swamps
71 Send forth, as light
72 Overly interested
73 Fearsome dino
78 Short-lived trends
79 Words of understanding
80 Nadal nickname
81 "Steady as __ goes"
82 Large collection
83 Hook's aide
86 Port facilities
87 Starting on
88 Co. designation
91 Lost traction
92 Skin soothers
93 Hoof sound
98 Trouble-free
99 Deserving attention
100 Wore well
101 Monastery resident
102 Unaided
103 Wrong move
104 "__ my reasons"
105 Riding charges
106 Silvery fish
108 Once existed
109 Whale cousin
110 Fencing blade
111 Amazon Alexa alternative
112 Included in an email
113 Tops, as a torte
114 Skillet

Appendix

By John Andrew Agpalo | Edited by Patti Varol

12/7



Last week's answers can be found in today's "Puzzle Island Solutions." © 2025 Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Across
1 "The Count of Monte Cristo" novelist
6 Gallagher of Oasis
10 Sour taste
14 Queue before Q
18 "Didn't we just see this?"
19 Meat dish topped with mashed potatoes
21 Ohio border lake
22 Compensation for those expecting bad outcomes?
24 Like some parks: Abbr.
25 Coat flaps
26 Receipt fig.
27 This evenin'
29 Quick chats?
31 Iguana, to some
32 Gem that's been photoshopped?
36 LuPone of "Agatha All Along"
38 Croc, but not gator
40 Jalapeño kin
41 Front covers?
43 Cartography collection
46 Poetic contraction
47 Browning's "__ Lippo Lippi"
50 Class that teaches the science behind flair bartending?
53 Periods of inactivity
55 Kinda-sorta
56 Rep. group
57 Pottery supplies
59 Went down
60 Dramamine target
63 Yale grad
64 Shoulder ornament
67 Vegan sammie
70 Paper jam?
73 Pair
74 Stuffed meat dish
76 Tattle (on)
77 Tiltrotor military aircraft
79 Writer Bombeck
80 Boondi __: spiced yogurt dish
82 Dead __ Scrolls
83 Alleviate
87 With all judges present
90 Well-worn long tops?
94 Opposite of paleo-
95 Smell
97 Glinda, to Elphaba, at first
98 Snare
99 Secondary thread
102 Ikebana vessel
104 Gleefully spiteful
105 Genetic makeup of a Trojan war hero?
109 Lentil dish
111 Pack animal
112 LASIK target
113 Lennox of R&B
114 Hindu god with the head of an elephant
116 Create a narrative out of reality show footage, e.g.
117 Message to a graduating class at an occult school?
124 Tibetan monk
125 Sine qua nons
126 Kevin McHale's "Glee" role
127 Serpents on sarcophagi
128 Frost's "The __ Not Taken"
129 Race goal, sometimes
130 Damp

Down
1 Who __ Nation: Saints fans
2 Disgusted sound
3 Turbulent situation
4 Japanese consumer electronics brand
5 __ turtle
6 Source of grief
7 Skater Midori
8 Org. with bomb-sniffing dogs
9 One spelling of an Asian gambling hub
10 Column that's beside the point?
11 Bee fore?
12 Actor Cage, casually
13 Hand motions
14 McCartney's songwriting partner
15 Application for dubious advice
16 Wee
17 Email ancestor
19 Irish speakers, e.g.
20 Press rooms?
23 "Isn't that something"
28 Visual style that tricks the eye
29 Card table declaration
30 __ syrup
32 Greedy choice
33 Depend (on)
34 Wee
35 Rapper Dr. __
37 Front-wheel alignment
39 Occur
42 Brynhild's beloved, in Norse myth
44 Find out
45 Places for small herb gardens
48 Option for a library book
49 Invite for
51 More meddlesome
52 African capital
54 Tempe sch.
58 Start of the Marine Corps motto
61 Therapists' org.
62 Bright spots?
65 Unlicensed radio broadcaster
66 Body spray brand
67 Fuss in the mirror
68 Carried
69 Cocktail ingredient
71 Wonderland cake words
72 Contents of college blue books
75 Trout's team, on scoreboards
78 Gossipy person
81 Hairstyles that many pick?
84 Carrier in French Polynesia
85 Performs like Ella
86 Awards for excellent plays and players
88 Aristocratic
89 Turner once big in the music industry?
91 __ Strauss & Co.
92 Big-screen movie format
93 119-Down figure
96 Spanish cheer
100 Range that includes Utah's Kings Peak
101 Sat on the kitchen counter, perhaps
103 Cheeses from the Netherlands
105 Fast Amtrak train
106 Musical conclusions
107 Pam's successor on "The Office"
108 Cheerful ditties
110 Whichever
114 Coins in a game of dreidel
115 Houston MLBer
118 Spanish bear
119 Country that turns 250 years old in 2026: Abbr.
120 Whopper
121 [Stop shearing me!]
122 Not trans
123 Fixed

Jumble

Unscramble the six Jumbles, one letter per square, to form six words. Then arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by this cartoon.

RNOEYR

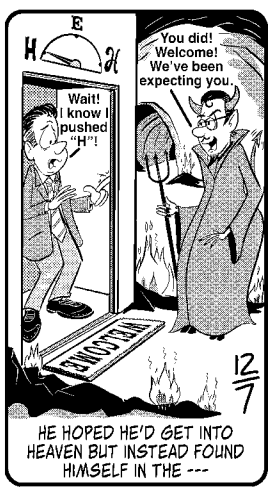
GOLNAO

LPTAEL

SREEYG

BTDUIO

RYEDNO


Wait! I know I pushed "H"!
You did! Welcome! We've been expecting you.
ETERNITY
12/7
HE HOPED HE'D GET INTO HEAVEN BUT INSTEAD FOUND HIMSELF IN THE ---

Get the free JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

PRINT YOUR ANSWER IN THE CIRCLES BELOW

- - -

This week's answers can be found in today's "Puzzle Island Solutions."

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek. © 2025 Tribune Content Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. PlayJumble.com

Sudoku

12/7

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box in bold borders contains every digit 1 to 9.

Level: 1 2 3 4

					1		6	
2								
	5		4		7		1	
	3				9			
9	7						8	3
			3					2
	1		2		3		4	
7								8
	8		1					

Last week's answers can be found in today's "Puzzle Island Solutions."

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Quote-Acrostic

1. Define clues, writing in Words column over numbered dashes.
2. Transfer letters to numbered squares in diagram.
3. When pattern is completed, quotation can be read left to right. The first letters of the filled-in words reading down form an acrostic yielding the speaker's name and the topic of the quotation.

Clues **Words**

A. Soothe ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
90 147 105 56 8 46 135

B. Kind ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
97 62 33 17 28 106

C. Linking ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
36 79 54 38 66 5 130

D. Brunch dish ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
55 110 13 119 10 149

E. Parades: 2 wds. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
94 81 141 9 53 73 137 69

F. Decayed tree part, perhaps ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
142 67 136 132 7 49 120 112

G. Opened wide ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
35 145 85 48 152 131

H. Didn't act up ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
146 24 76 34 44 64 121

I. Struggles ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
138 107 22 52 23 150 128

J. Purpose ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
125 31 88 95 42 117

K. "____ Man," by The Beatles ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
74 15 111 124 71 12 86

L. Spectral ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
127 58 27 116 20 140 134

M. Tolerate ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
143 103 113 59 83 123

N. "___ Christmas" (holiday song) ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
50 91 68 80 45

O. "Far out!" ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
77 101 139 29 84 153 100

P. Tizzy ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
41 25 63 151 102 99

Q. Halfhearted ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
18 148 47 82 96 129 16 60

R. Remote ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
14 114 108 3 70 30 144

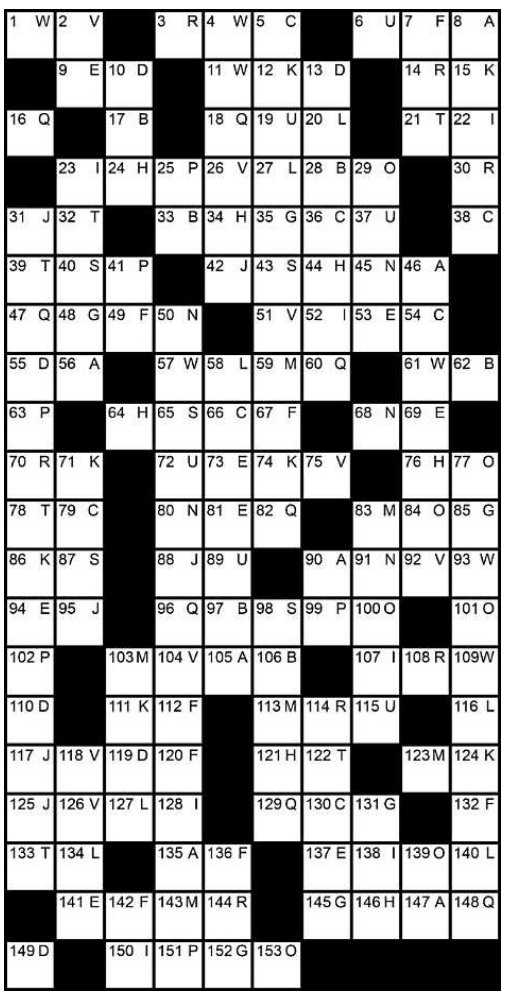
S. Hand brake, e.g. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
40 43 65 98 87

T. Belabor ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
21 78 39 133 32 122

U. Stiff ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
6 19 89 72 37 115

V. "Inside Out" subjects ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
2 51 92 75 118 104 126 26

W. Lake crosser ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
4 93 1 61 109 11 57



Last week's answers can be found in today's "Puzzle Island Solutions."

By Cornelia Paws. Edited by Debbie Manber Kupfer.
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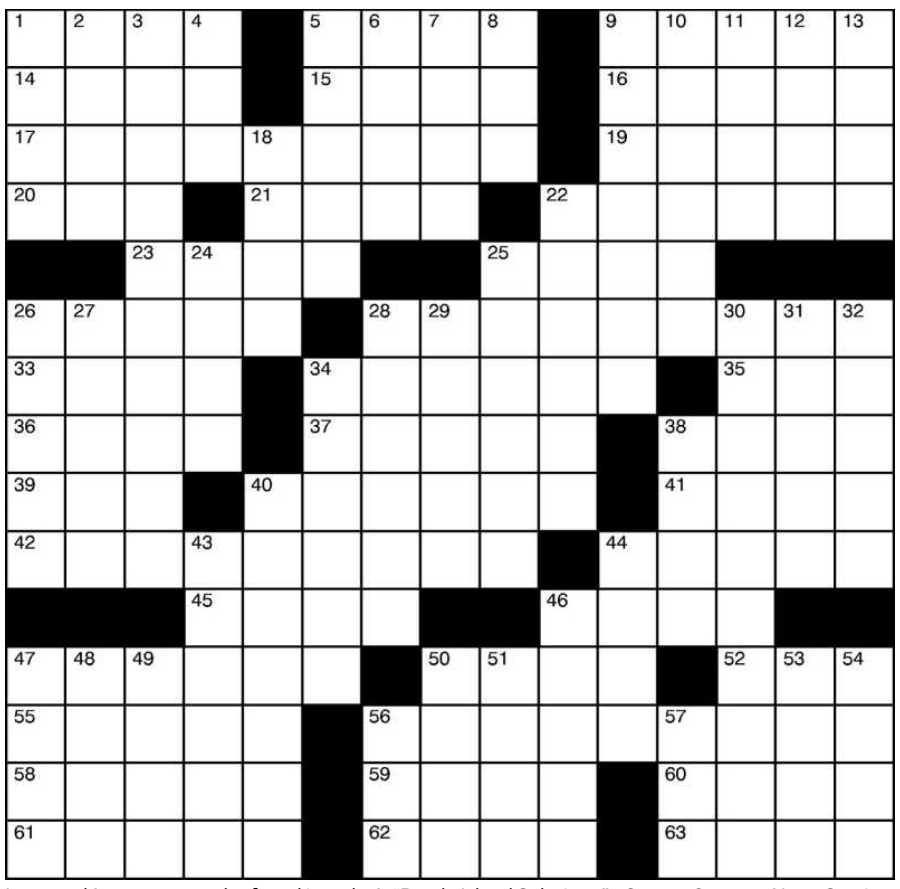
12/7

Ahoy!

By Charles Preston



Across
1 Eight dry quarts
5 Theda Bara, for one
9 Zeal
14 Yodeler's answer
15 "On the Waterfront" director Kazan
16 Man with a code
17 Lea
19 Larger than Lincoln
20 Big ___, CA
21 Garfield's pal
22 Lower back region
23 Irving Berlin hit "___ This a Lovely Day ...?"
25 Dubonnet or claret
26 Prices
28 Memorable sportswriter Rice
33 Citrus fruit
34 Puts up
35 Attorney's rate
36 Hawkeye portrayer Alda
37 Bridal path
38 Ollie's sidekick
39 Court divider
40 Lustrous fabric
41 Not his
42 Final resting place of Elvis
44 Secretariat, e.g.
45 Hit Broadway musical of the 1960s
46 Reasons for braces
47 Care of the entire patient
50 Teenage sleuth Nancy
52 Garden tool
55 Site of an 1836 battle
56 Its capital is Godthab
58 Phileas Fogg's portrayer
59 Hostels
60 Bakery fixture
61 Urges on
62 Brief letter
63 Western Colorado feature

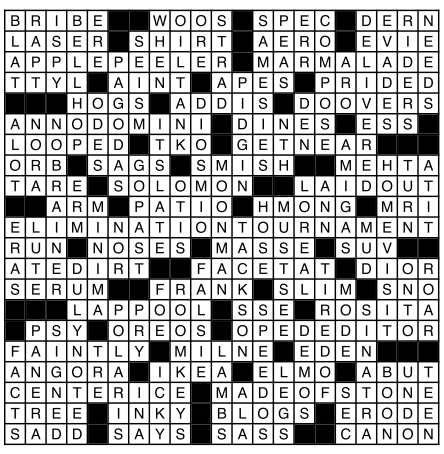
Down
1 Backgammon needs
2 Light beige
3 Personal charms
4 Evander Holyfield stats
5 African plain
6 Jai ___
7 Open-pit, for one
8 Hippie home
9 Totals
10 The Desert Fox
11 Dreary
12 Government watchdog: acron.
13 1954 Hitchcock thriller "___ Window"
18 Junior and others
22 Tilia Americana tree
24 British carbine
25 Like Avila
26 Louder than a ping
27 Tennessee pro, pre-Titan
28 Johnny Winter's instrument
29 Out of bed
30 Men's cologne
31 Approaches
32 Thickheaded
34 Pagan idols
38 "Little ___ of Horrors"
40 Vivaldi's "The Four ___"
43 Rang a bell
44 Actress Goldie
46 Gaggle members
47 "___ 'Em High"
48 Gallimaufry
49 Etna emission
50 Ian Fleming adventure
51 Hit Broadway musical of the 1990s
53 Change for a fin
54 "Showboat" author Ferber
56 Part of a Tom Collins
57 Sellers co-star Herbert

Last week's answers can be found in today's "Puzzle Island Solutions." © 2025 Creators News Service.

Last week's crosswords

"SPY-FI"

"Think Hard"



"Dissed"

Last week's Quote-Acrostic

CYNTHIA RYLANT: IN NOVEMBER: In November, people are good to each other. They carry pies to each other's homes and talk by crackling woodstoves, sipping mellow cider. They travel very far on a special November day just to share a meal.

Last week's Sudoku

8	4	5	1	6	7	9	2	3
6	7	1	9	3	2	4	8	5
3	2	9	5	8	4	1	6	7
7	8	6	2	1	5	3	4	9
5	9	2	7	4	3	8	1	6
1	3	4	6	9	8	5	7	2
4	6	3	8	7	9	2	5	1
9	5	7	4	2	1	6	3	8
2	1	8	3	5	6	7	9	4

This week's Jumble

ORNERY PALLET OUTBID
LAGOON GEYSER YONDER

He hoped he'd get into Heaven but instead found himself in the —

NOT-SO-GREAT BEYOND

Horoscopes

If December 7 is your birthday: The month of December could bring you many gifts and few, if any, challenges. Big gifts for your future, such as physical energy, healing, recognition, and the ability to actualize more of your personal potential. Insights could be off the charts, and friends could play a role, too.

Aries (March 21-April 19): Cocooning indoors may sound better than fighting early holiday crowds. Upcoming travel plans could be exciting. Give yourself permission to find your soul tribe, it starts with fearless authenticity.

Taurus (April 20-May 20): What you have to say might be just what is needed now, offer comfort, support, and understanding. Try to come to terms around a financial agreement instead of remaining poles apart.

Gemini (May 21-June 20): You and/or a partner could be making the rounds of gatherings with extra sexy style. Sidestep an incipient power struggle.

Cancer (June 21-July 22): Take a deep breath. Another. When you know how to come back into your own calm center after a trigger, you become your own best safe space. Search it up: How to regulate your nervous system.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): Create today, there's both the imagination and the energy to work on something, creative projects could fall into place and should turn out satisfyingly well.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Though the energies today could feel inward, you still might have to stay harnessed to tasks. Prospects could be solid for daters if you're also in induvial soulmate cycles.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): If you're working today, it might feel more aligned than you might expect. People can only hear and understand what they have context for, someone may not be able to grasp a nuanced viewpoint.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Sometimes you find just what you've been looking for, today could be one of those days. A money matter that been going around and around may continue for a while longer.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Someone might have your back more powerfully than you know, today you might get a first look. A lot of abundance is continuing to stage for you, your financial sectors are filled with helpful planets.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): A partner could bring just the right chicken soup to feed your soul. In turn, you bring insights, companionship, and just plain raw talent.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Sometimes, helping someone else can be the best way to save yourself — just ask any rescue pet owner who really saved whom.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): Sometimes the act of creation gets elevated to a 'heart form,' today could feel just like that. Career could occupy your mind some today, get to a point of clarity before you take any action.

— Magi Helen, Tribune Content Agency

Bridge

Q.1—Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ A 5 ♥ A 2 ♦ K 10 6 4 ♣ A Q J 7 3

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
?			

What call would you make?

Q.2—North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ A Q 9 8 7 5 3 ♥ 8 ♦ 6 ♣ A 8 7 2

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

What call would you make?

Q.3—East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ 7 5 4 ♥ A 8 6 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ K J 10 8 7
Partner opens 1NT, 15-17, and right-hand opponent passes.
What call would you make?

Q.4—Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ Q ♥ A K 10 5 3 ♦ J 7 6 ♣ Q 8 4 3

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠	Dbl	Pass
?			

What call would you make?

Answers in Monday's comics pages.

— Bob Jones, Tribune Content Agency

Word Game

This game challenges you to find as many words as you can, as quickly as you can, in one master word.

PASSIVITY (pah-SIV-ih-tee): The state of being inert or inactive.

Can you find 19 or more words in PASSIVITY?

Average mark: 14 words
Time limit: 25 minutes

Here are the rules:

1. Words must be four or more letters. 2. Words that acquire four letters by the addition of an "s," such as "bats" and "cats," are not used. 3. Use only one form of a verb — either "pose" or "posed," not both. 4. Proper nouns and slang terms are not used.

Answers to the word game:

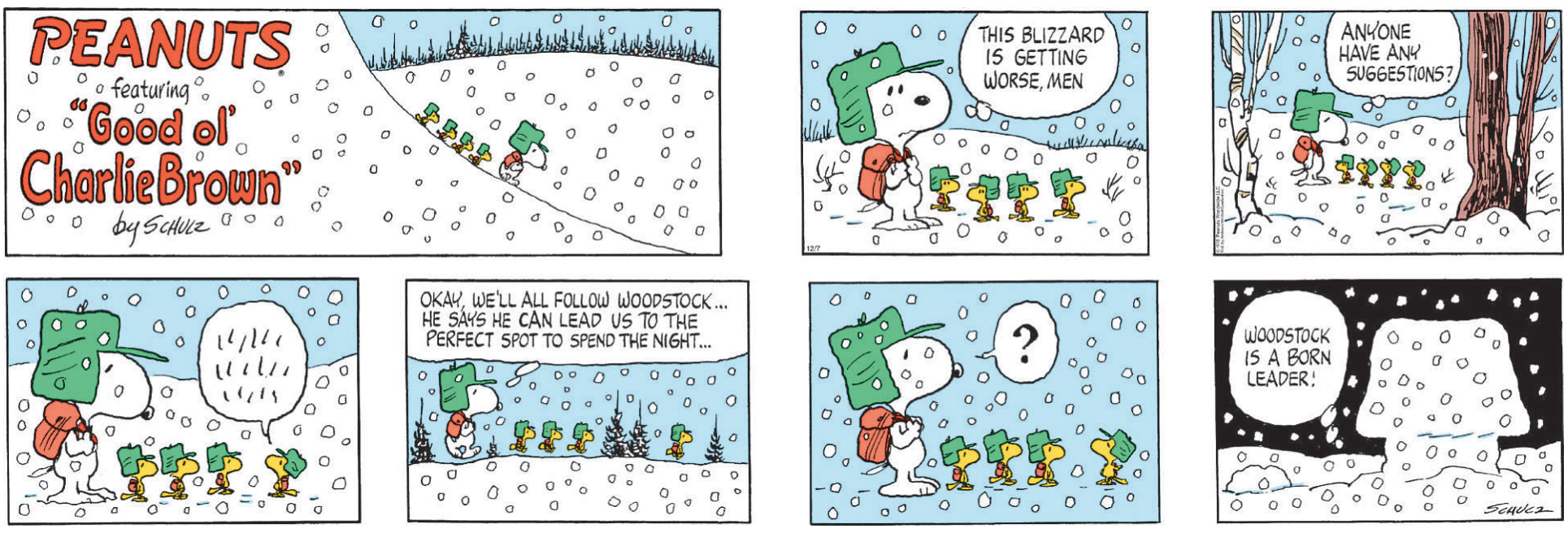
pass; past; pasty; patsy; pita; pity; psst; apsis; sati; spat; spay; spit; stay; vast; visa; visit; vista; vita; tipsy

— Kathleen Saxe, distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication for UFS

PEANUTS

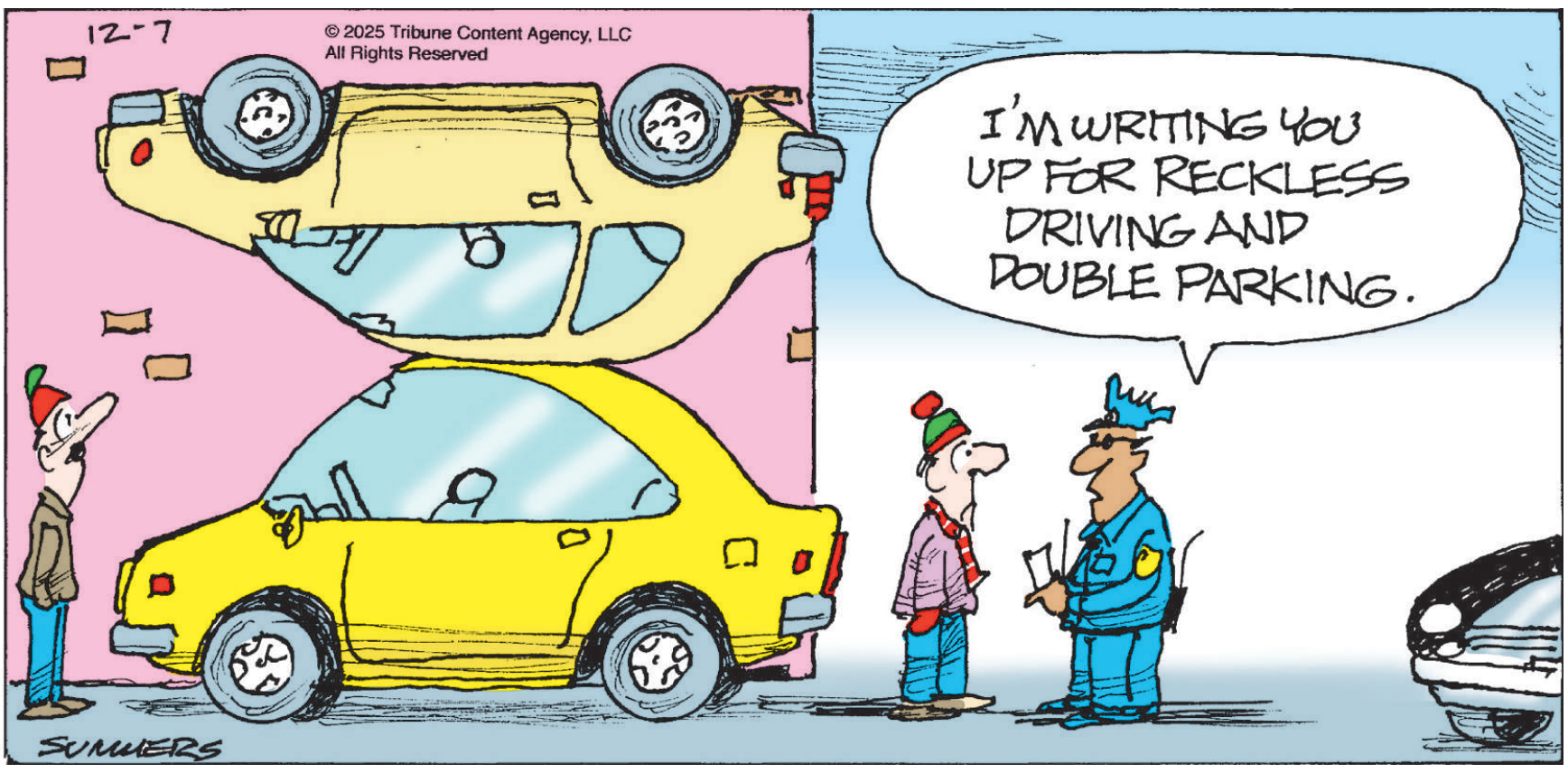
featuring "Good ol' CharlieBrown"

by Schulz


THIS BLIZZARD IS GETTING WORSE, MEN
ANYONE HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS?
OKAY, WE'LL ALL FOLLOW WOODSTOCK... HE SAYS HE CAN LEAD US TO THE PERFECT SPOT TO SPEND THE NIGHT...
?
WOODSTOCK IS A BORN LEADER!
SCHULZ

BOUND & GAGGED

BY DANA SUMMERS


12-7
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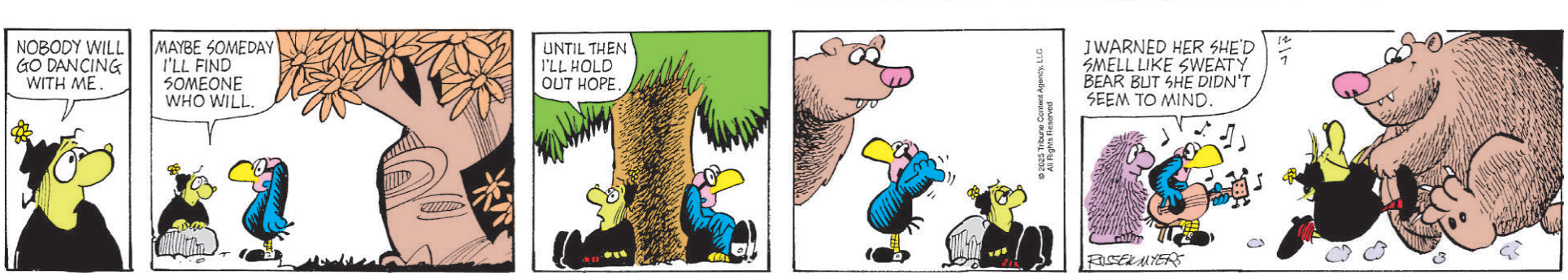
I'M WRITING YOU UP FOR RECKLESS DRIVING AND DOUBLE PARKING.
SUMMERS

BROOM-HILDA

BY RUSSELL MYERS


NOBODY WILL GO DANCING WITH ME.
MAYBE SOMEDAY I'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO WILL.
UNTIL THEN I'LL HOLD OUT HOPE.
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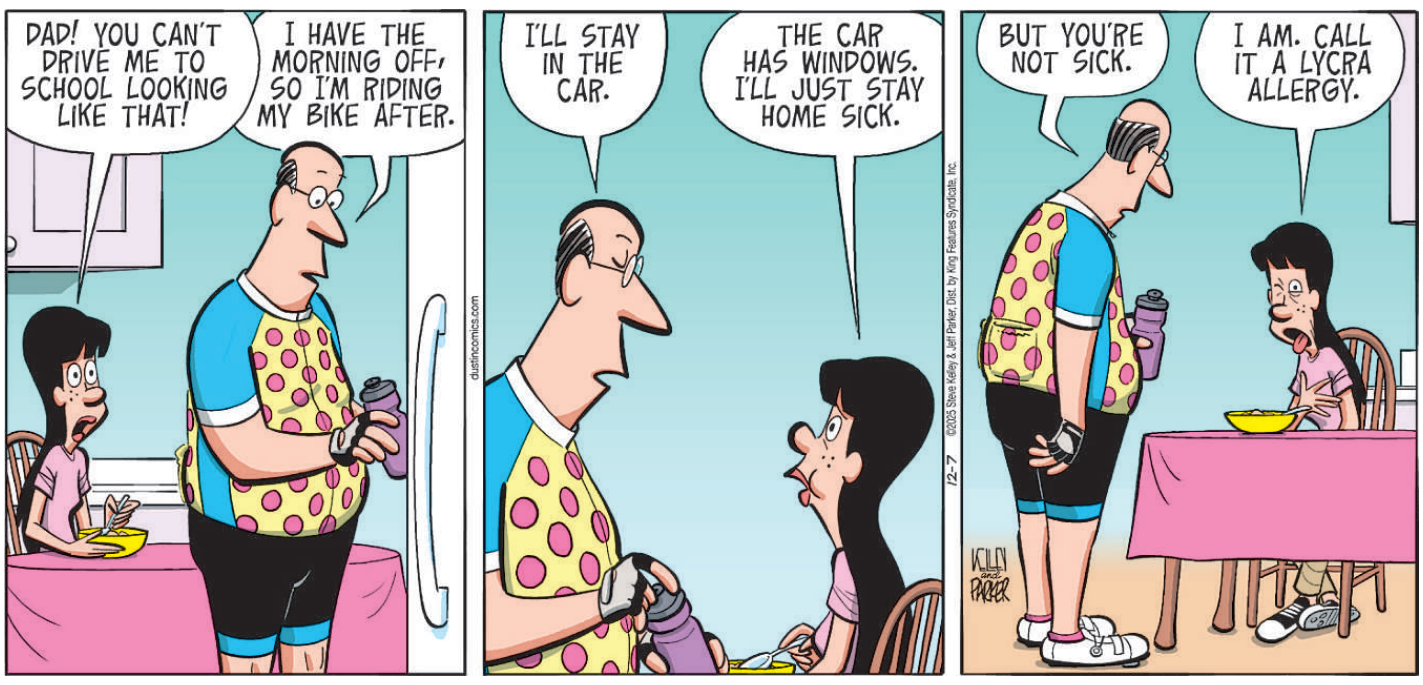
I WARNED HER SHE'D SMELL LIKE SWEATY BEAR BUT SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO MIND.
12-7
RUSSELL MYERS

Dustin By Steve Kelley and Jeff Parker


DAD! YOU CAN'T DRIVE ME TO SCHOOL LOOKING LIKE THAT!
I HAVE THE MORNING OFF, SO I'M RIDING MY BIKE AFTER.
dustincomics.com
I'LL STAY IN THE CAR.
THE CAR HAS WINDOWS. I'LL JUST STAY HOME SICK.
12-7
©2025 Steve Kelley & Jeff Parker. Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.
BUT YOU'RE NOT SICK.
I AM. CALL IT A LYCRA ALLERGY.
KELLY and PARKER

The Lockhorns
By Bunny Hoest and John Reiner

"IT'S FINALLY HAPPENED... I CAN'T REMEMBER A SINGLE PHONE NUMBER."

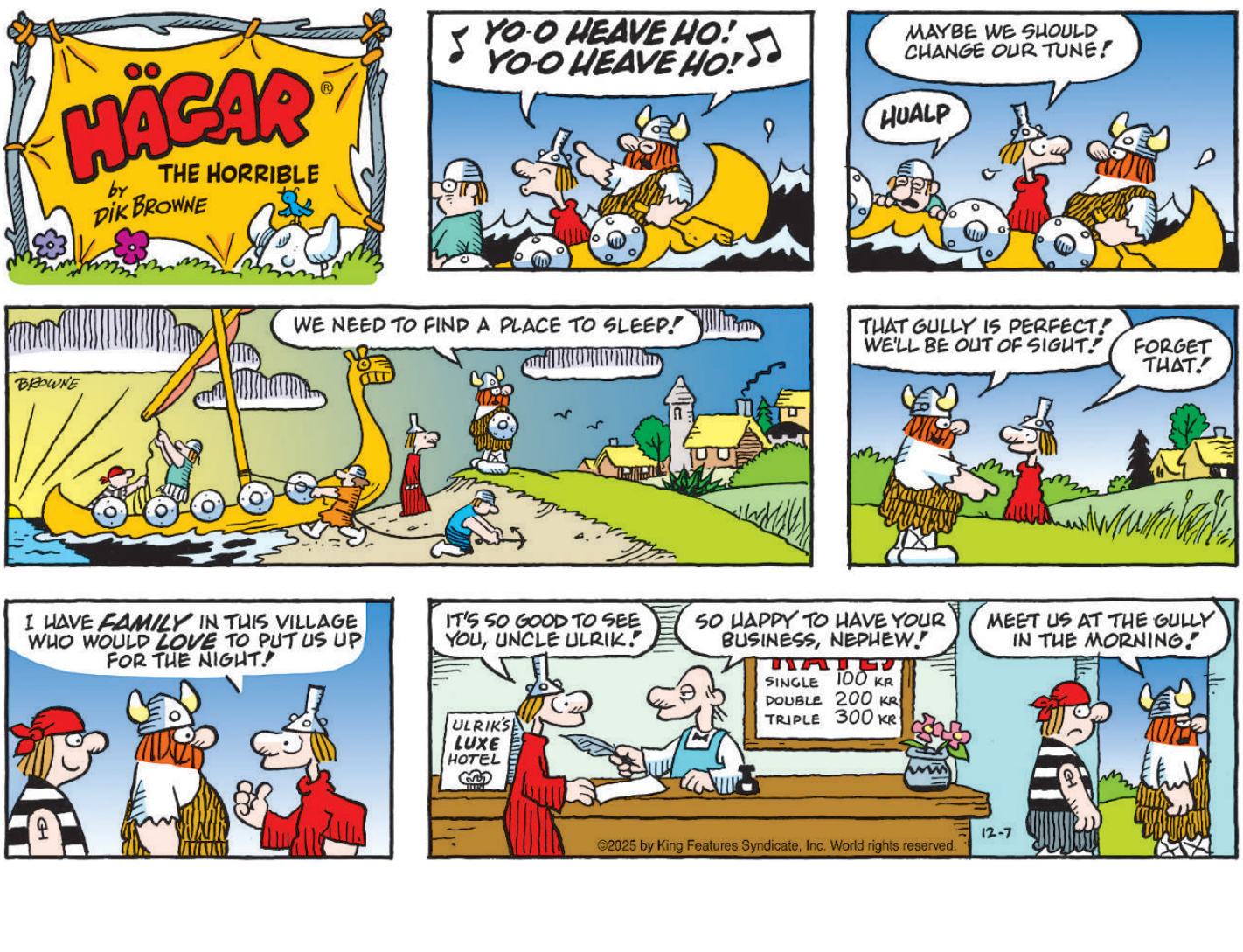
"LEROY WANTS TO HAVE HIS CAKE, PIE, DANISH, BROWNIES, COOKIES AND DONUTS AND EAT THEM, TOO."

"SAY SOMETHING NICE ABOUT LORETTA? OKAY... YOU HAVE EXCELLENT TASTE IN HUSBANDS."

"PLEASE STOP REFERRING TO HER VOWS AS A VEILED THREAT."

HÄGAR THE HORRIBLE

by Dik Browne


YO-O HEAVE HO! YO-O HEAVE HO!
MAYBE WE SHOULD CHANGE OUR TUNE!
HUALP
WE NEED TO FIND A PLACE TO SLEEP!
BROWNE
THAT GULLY IS PERFECT! WE'LL BE OUT OF SIGHT!
FORGET THAT!
I HAVE FAMILY IN THIS VILLAGE WHO WOULD LOVE TO PUT US UP FOR THE NIGHT!
IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU, UNCLE ULRIK!
SO HAPPY TO HAVE YOUR BUSINESS, NEPHEW!
MEET US AT THE GULLY IN THE MORNING!
ULRIK'S LUXE HOTEL
SINGLE 100 KR
DOUBLE 200 KR
TRIPLE 300 KR
12-7
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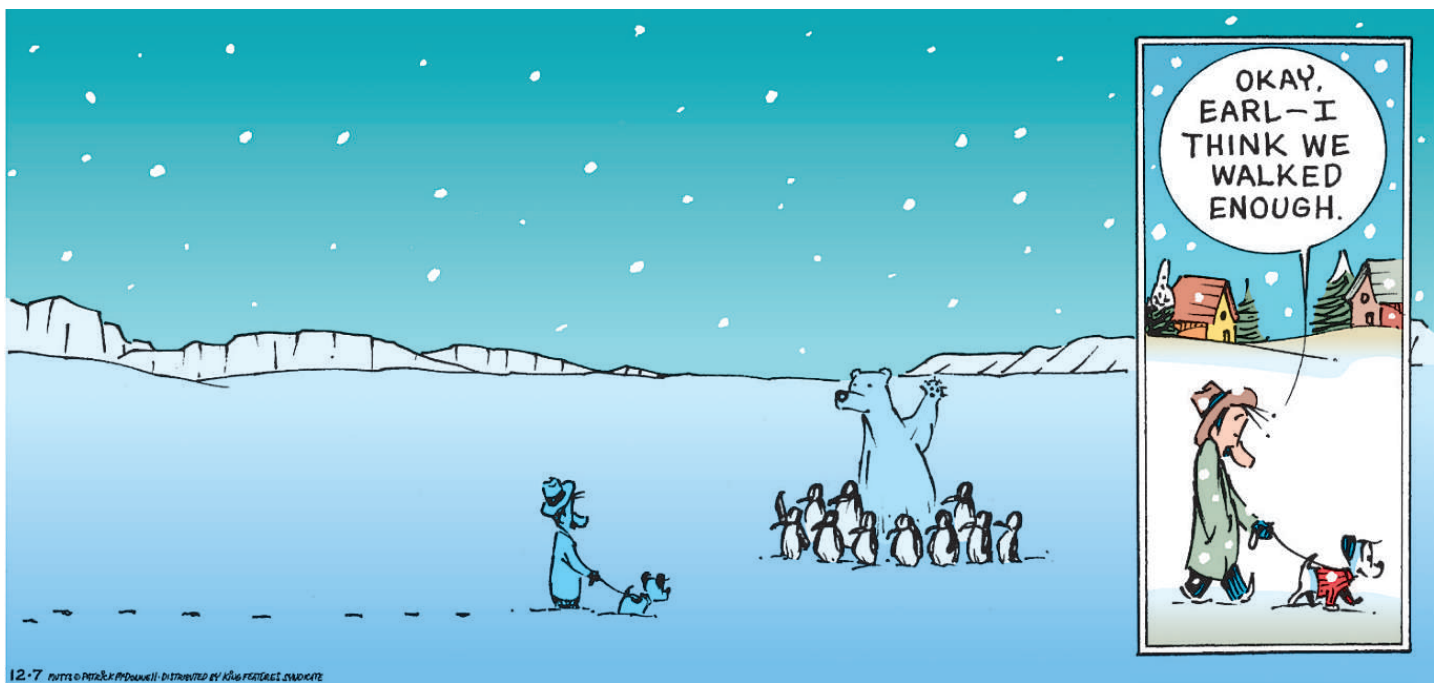
SHERMAN'S LAGOON
by Jim Toomey
LAST WEEK I GOT A HOLE IN ONE!
SO, THIS WEEK I WORE THE SAME SHELL, HAD THE SAME THING FOR BREAKFAST...
USED THE SAME GOLF BALL, SAME TEE, WORE THE SAME HAT...
AND I PLAYED THE WORST GOLF OF MY LIFE!
MAYBE SUPERSTITION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.
www.shermanslagoon.com
MAYBE EXCELLING AT A SPORT IS ALL ABOUT DEDICATION, HARD WORK AND SACRIFICE.
12-7
©2025 Jim Toomey. Dist by Andrews McMeel Syndication
I DIDN'T WEAR THE SAME UNDERWEAR!
...AND LUCKY UNDERWEAR.

Mutts By Patrick McDonnell



The Middletons By Ralph Dunagin and Dana Summers

SO, ARE WE TALKING DILL?
BREAD AND BUTTER?
© 2025 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All Rights Reserved
BABY GHERKIN?
SWEET?
12-7
I GIVE UP TRYING TO TEACH YOUR MOTHER PICKLEBALL.
DICK TRACY®
CHARLES ETTINGER
MIKE CURTIS
COLORS: SHANE FISHER
TRACY'S HALL OF FAME
CHRISTOPHER DARDEN
BORN IN CALIFORNIA IN 1956, DARDEN WORKED IN THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR 15 YEARS, AND WAS A CO-PROSECUTOR IN THE O.J. SIMPSON MURDER CASE. HE HAS CO-AUTHORED A NUMBER OF CRIME NOVELS, AND HAS APPEARED ON TV AS A LEGAL ANALYST.
-LT. WALTER REIMER
GPS TRACKER
HEY, YOU!
YOU MESS WITH OUR RIG?
NO! OW!
@$! IT'S A COP CAR!
COPS? QUICK! GET IN!
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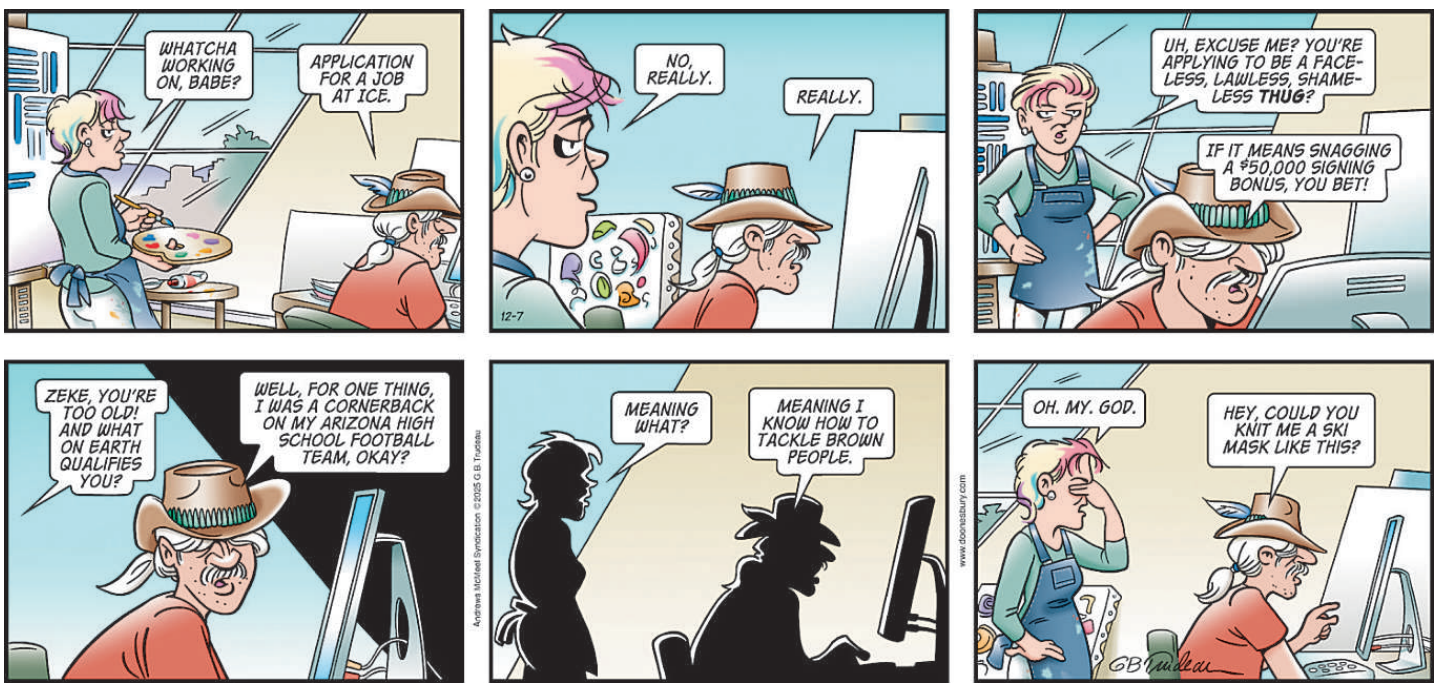
12/07
THEY TURNED!
STAY CALM AND GET US OUTTA HERE.

Doonesbury By Garry Trudeau


WHATCHA WORKING ON, BABE?
APPLICATION FOR A JOB AT ICE.
NO, REALLY.
REALLY.
UH, EXCUSE ME? YOU'RE APPLYING TO BE A FACE-LESS, LAWLESS, SHAME-LESS THUG?
IF IT MEANS SNAGGING A $50,000 SIGNING BONUS, YOU BET!
12-7
ZEKE, YOU'RE TOO OLD! AND WHAT ON EARTH QUALIFIES YOU?
WELL, FOR ONE THING, I WAS A CORNERBACK ON MY ARIZONA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM, OKAY?
Andrews McMeel Syndication ©2025 G.B. Trudeau
MEANING WHAT?
MEANING I KNOW HOW TO TACKLE BROWN PEOPLE.
OH. MY. GOD.
HEY, COULD YOU KNIT ME A SKI MASK LIKE THIS?
www.doonesbury.com
GB Trudeau

Prickly City By Scott Stantis

GOOD READS

Stacey Wescott/ Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

GOOD READS

This year's top 10 books tackle censorship, crime and compassion

Back to News

Ireland’s rock star

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Ireland’s rock star

A creative sojourn to the Burren’s vast landscape on country’s rugged west coast.

Back to News

Naming your home

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Naming your home

Americans giving the longtime European practice a modern, fanciful twist.

Back to News

Downstate voters key to victory for Dems

In primary, credibility beyond Chicago and its suburbs is essential

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

An endorsement by a former one-term lieutenant governor who has been out of office for a decade ordinarily wouldn't hold much significance in a primary campaign for U.S. Senate.

But an endorsement from Sheila Simon might be a slight exception. Not because of the ex-lieutenant governor's individual political influence, but because, even as the Democratic voter base in downstate Illinois is ever-shrinking, her support highlights that statewide candidates must still spend considerable time and energy wooing party members far from deep-blue Cook County.

That's become particularly true in the Democratic Party's Senate primary campaign. All three major candidates in the race are from the Chicago region and are running to succeed retiring U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin of Springfield, who for the last 28 years has balanced an upstate-downstate split in Illinois' Senate representation.

Although ballots cast outside the six-county Chicago region accounted for less than a quarter of the overall vote in the past two contested Democratic Senate primaries, in 2010 and 2016, the announcement last week that Simon was backing U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi's candidacy serves as a reminder that all three top-tier candidates in the March 17 primary know building credibility beyond Chicago and its increasingly Democratic suburbs is essential.

Simon's backing does, of course, carry some modest political weight. Now a law professor at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, she's the daughter of the late U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, the man Durbin replaced in the Senate in 1997. She also remains a recognizable and well-connected figure in a region where her family name is tied to the identity and history of local Democratic politics.

Coming out on top of a primary field that currently stands at 14 candidates will require building a coalition of support that extends beyond Chicago and Cook County, said John Jackson, a visiting professor at SIU's Paul Simon Public Policy Institute.

That's a big part of the reason the top three candidates have played up their downstate bona fides, Jackson said.

For both Krishnamoorthi, of northwest suburban Schaumburg, and Rep. Robin Kelly, of south suburban Lynwood, that means emphasizing their Peoria roots: his upbringing in an immigrant family there and her time at Bradley University and two decades, on and off, spent living in the central Illinois river city. Kelly also points to the makeup of her current congressional district, which stretches from Chicago's South Side to Danville in east-central Illinois.

Back to News

‘Really reckless’

Experts: From shooting to Slim Jims, immigration agents’ poor tactics made for needless safety risks

Above: A federal agent points his gun sideways during an immigration enforcement action in the Little Village neighborhood on Nov. 8. Longtime urban police leaders questioned that tactic and many others used by immigration agents during Operation Midway Blitz. The policing leaders said the agents routinely behaved in ways that — beyond potentially being unconstitutional — unnecessarily endangered suspects, protesters, innocent bystanders and the agents themselves. Armando L. Sanchez/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Operation Midway Blitz flooded Chicago with federal immigration agents, fueled frequent protests and — to policing experts — offered something else.

The operation showed how not to police.

In incident after incident, experts said, immigration and Border Patrol agents routinely took actions that not only infuriated civil libertarians and everyday residents but broke urban policing protocols meant to limit danger for suspects, protesters, passersby and even officers themselves.

“They haven’t done anything that is anywhere close to a standard police practice,” said former Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske, a former Seattle police chief and an Obama-era appointee.

Added former Chicago police Superintendent Eddie Johnson: “In my humble opinion, it’s a breeding ground for disaster, the way they apply their tactics and methods. ... From what I see, they just seem to be just really reckless.”

A Tribune review of the feds’ policing tactics follows a scathing, 233-page opinion by U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis that called out many of the federal agents’ tactics from a constitutional perspective. And the subsequent release of footage from agents’ body cameras late last month not only contradicted claims they made in use-of-force reports but chronicled some of the chaos on the streets.

While some of that chaos for sure could be blamed on the actions of some protesters and arrest targets, career urban policing leaders blamed much of that chaos — in both incidents cited by Ellis and others — on what the leaders described as shoddy policing tactics shunned by more advanced big-city police forces.

The questionable tactics were on display in ways big and small, experts said, from the way agents regularly tossed tear gas, to how they pointed guns at protesters and the media, sped around town and handcuffed arrestees.

Back to News

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

INSIDE: Kristi Noem's appearance on Saturday at the annual Christmas tree ship ceremony sparks protests at Navy Pier. In Elgin, federal immigration agents use tear gas and pepper spray on a crowd gathered to protest an arrest. Stories in Chicagoland, Page 3

White Eagle closes after decades as Polish community hub

Niles banquet hall played host to litany of dignitaries, celebrities

The White Eagle banquet hall in Niles is permanently closed. Gabi Vargas, a sales representative who started working there as a teen, reminisces there on Nov. 24. Terrence Antonio James/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The phone at the White Eagle in Niles keeps ringing, with longtime customers asking for one last pierogi or a final bowl of its famed mushroom barley soup.

An older woman cried when she learned it wouldn't be possible, recalled office manager Diane Palazzo of Victoria Venues, the current owner. The banquet hall had quietly closed its doors several weeks ago.

"She was totally shocked," said Palazzo, who has attended events at White Eagle since childhood. "She said, 'I don't think you know what it means. I've had everything there.' This is where all of her memories were."After more than six decades as a cornerstone of local Polish culture and a fixture in national politics, the iconic banquet hall and events center has shut its doors to the public.

The venue hosted a litany of dignitaries and celebrities over the years, from Pope John Paul II to President Jimmy Carter to former Polish President Lech Walesa. Three-time heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali was known to have dined there as well.

But it was more than just a magnet for celebrities. It was a constant in the community, a place where seemingly everyone has a memory of gathering. For generations, patrons marked every season of life at the White Eagle, celebrating their marriages and baptisms at the hall as well as grieving loved ones at funeral and memorial receptions.

Many regulars made a routine of visiting the White Eagle for a meal after paying their respects at the gravesites of loved ones at St. Adalbert Cemetery across the street, added Palazzo, whose own mother and father are buried there.

"It was something near and dear to their hearts," she said. "People got married here. People christened their children (and celebrated) here. People buried their parents and had the funeral luncheon here. So it was just a part of their family."

Now the 70,000-square-foot event space is slated for demolition.

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Bears cornerback a difference-maker

John J. Kim/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Bears cornerback a difference-maker

Nahshon Wright's "emotional" breakout season for the Bears comes as he mourns his JUCO coach John Beam. Plus, Al Harris has made an impact on the Bears for years. And wherever he goes, takeaways follow. Chicago Sports

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{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

JUSTICE Department PLAYS UP ARREST IN BOMB CASE: Yet leaders who announced the arrest were silent about the violence that took place on Jan. 6, 2021, at the U.S. Capitol. Nation & World

White Eagle closes after decades as Polish community hub

Niles banquet hall played host to litany of dignitaries, celebrities

Abner Mikva celebrates his win over U.S. Rep. Samuel H. Young for Congress in the White Eagle in Niles on Nov. 5, 1974. James Mayo/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

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Noem's visit sparks protests at Navy Pier

DHS secretary appeared at 26th annual Christmas tree ship ceremony Saturday

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem carries a Christmas tree to load it into a truck during the Voyage of Chicago's Christmas Ship, USCGC Mackinaw on Saturday at Polk Brothers Park. The Christmas trees were later donated to local families in need. Dominic Di Palermo/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

An appearance by U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem at the annual Christmas tree ship ceremony at Navy Pier led one of two downtown protests on Saturday — one targeting immigrant raids and the other the brewing military conflict in Venezuela.

The Navy Pier Christmas ceremony is a tradition in which crew members offload approximately 1,200 trees from the USCGC Mackinaw onto trucks to donate to families in need.

During a brief speech Saturday morning, Noem thanked everyone involved in organizing the event and wanted those in attendance to "recognize that we're bringing them news of happiness and peace."

Dozens of protesters gathered more than an hour before Noem spoke, but were moved back to Polk Bros. Park by Chicago police officers before the event began. Although the group had been moved, they could be heard chanting from the other side of the park.

Activist Andy Thayer said Noem "crashed" the ceremony as a publicity stunt. "I think it's insulting that she came to our city after doing so much destruction, to not just our city's residents, but also the city itself," Thayer said. "It's been a real huge economic hit. We've had families separated, we've had people losing their jobs because of what she's done, and she's got some nerve to show up."

Beatrix Hoffman, of the Gold Coast neighborhood, went to the protest after seeing a post about Noem coming to Chicago for the Christmas tree ceremony.

"We don't want her here," Hoffman said. "I'm sick of this government coming into our city and abducting our neighbors."

Noem's Christmastime visit comes after a fall in which thousands of Chicagoans and suburbanites protested, resisted and whistled at federal immigration agents who descended into their neighborhoods.

Without immediate regard for citizenship or legal

Federal immigration agents use tear gas on Elgin crowd

Federal agents tackle a protester after a faceoff outside an apartment building along Maple Lane on Saturday in Elgin. Community members and federal agents faced off for several hours Saturday after the agents chased a man and he barricaded himself on a second-floor balcony. Stacey Wescott/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Federal immigration agents deployed tear gas and pepper spray Saturday on a crowd that gathered to protest a prolonged arrest in a northwest Chicago suburb, angering neighbors who said it was "uncalled for" and "tremendously disappointing."

The standoff began around 10 a.m. Saturday when about 15 agents showed up to arrest an unidentified man at an apartment building on the 1600 block of Maple Lane in Elgin. Elgin police said there had been a traffic crash that morning involving a federal agent and the man, who then fled to the building.

The crowd, blowing whistles and shouting at agents to leave, grew throughout the morning, eventually swelling to at least 200 people by the afternoon. By 2:30 p.m., the man the agents were attempting to arrest was still on the balcony. About 30 agents at the scene were trying to negotiate with him, while the crowd told the man not to talk to them.

Around 3:30 p.m., agents reportedly arrested the man while he was inside an apartment. Afterward, videos taken by a witness at the scene showed some people throwing snowballs at the agents and their vehicles, while others yelled at them to stop.

While driving away, agents hurled pepper spray and flash-bang grenades into the crowd. One agent told community members, "Back up or gas will be deployed," seconds before he threw a canister, a video shows.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokespeople didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. Meanwhile, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem joined the U.S. Coast Guard for a Christmas tree event at Navy Pier on Saturday.

Audrey Luhmann, 40, of West Chicago, said the pepper spray and tear gas went "everywhere" into the crowd and that she could still smell it about an hour later on her clothes. Luhmann said neighbors asked the agents to see a warrant, which they refused.

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‘Really reckless’

Experts: From shooting to Slim Jims, immigration agents’ poor tactics made for needless safety risks

Franklin Park police body-camera footage captures the aftermath of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent shooting that killed Silverio Villegas González on Sept. 12. Village of Franklin Park

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Operation Midway Blitz flooded Chicago with federal immigration agents, fueled frequent protests and — to policing experts — offered something else.

The operation showed how not to police.

In incident after incident, experts said, immigration and Border Patrol agents routinely took actions that not only infuriated civil libertarians and everyday residents but broke urban policing protocols meant to limit danger for suspects, protesters, passersby and even officers themselves.

“They haven’t done anything that is anywhere close to a standard police practice,” said former Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske, a former Seattle police chief and an Obama-era appointee.

Added former Chicago police Superintendent Eddie Johnson: “In my humble opinion, it’s a breeding ground for disaster, the way they apply their tactics and methods. ... From what I see, they just seem to be just really reckless.”

A Tribune review of the feds’ policing tactics follows a scathing, 233-page opinion by U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis that called out many of the federal agents’ tactics from a constitutional perspective. And the subsequent release of footage from agents’ body cameras late last month not only contradicted claims they made in use-of-force reports but chronicled some of the chaos on the streets.

While some of that chaos for sure could be blamed on the actions of some protesters and arrest targets, career urban policing leaders blamed much of that chaos — in both incidents cited by Ellis and others — on what the leaders described as shoddy policing tactics shunned by more advanced big-city police forces.

The questionable tactics were on display in ways big and small, experts said, from the way agents regularly tossed tear gas, to how they pointed guns at protesters and the media, sped around town and handcuffed arrestees.

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‘Really reckless’

Experts: From shooting to Slim Jims, immigration agents’ poor tactics made for needless safety risks

Federal officers detain a person while community members and activists protest near the 3900 block of South Kedzie Avenue on Oct. 4 in Chicago. Armando L. Sanchez/Chicago Tribune

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Border Patrol Cmdr. Gregory Bovino buys drinks at a Skokie gas station while conducting immigration enforcement actions in the area on Oct. 31. Armando L. Sanchez/Chicago Tribune

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Redistricting bill passes Ind. House

But Senate leaders have said it doesn't have the votes there

Hundreds rallied against the Indiana House's plan to redistrict on Dec. 1 in Indianapolis. Alexandra Kukulka/Post-Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The Indiana House passed new congressional maps Friday and sent them to the Senate, where the bill's future is unclear since Senate leadership has stated multiple times since October it doesn't have the votes.

House Bill 1032, which addresses mid-census redistricting and gives Republicans an advantage in all nine congressional districts, passed 57-41, with 12 Republicans joining all Democrats present in voting against the bill. State Rep. Tim Yocum, R-Clinton, voted against the bill in the House Elections and Apportionment Committee and on the House floor.

State Reps. Michael Aylesworth, R-Hebron; Julie Olthoff, R-Crown Point; Hal Slager, R-Schererville, and Ed Soliday, R-Valparaiso all voted in favor of mid-census redistricting.

State Reps. Mike Andrade, D-Munster; Earl Harris Jr., D-East Chicago; Ragen Hatcher, D-Gary, Carolyn Jackson, D-Hammond; Chuck Moseley, D-Portage; Randy Novak, D-Michigan City; and Vernon Smith, D-Gary voted against mid-census redistricting.

During final reading of the bill, no Republican House member addressed the bill besides state Rep. Ben Smaltz, R-Auburn, who authored the bill, and House Speaker Todd Huston, R-Fishers.

States across the country are conducting mid-census redistricting, Huston said, which means Indiana should address the issue as well.

"This is the place we are right now. This is our time to act," Huston said. "This is a challenging issue, one none of us took lightly. Not one of us didn't have long, thoughtful, meaningful conversations about it."

While it's likely that state Republicans have talked about mid-census redistricting privately, Jackson said she found it "troubling" that none of the Republican House members have addressed the issue from the House floor.

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{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

THREATS PILE UP AGAINST IND. GOP: Trump and his allies press senators to redraw congressional map. Nation & World, inside Opinion on Page 6

Sweeping ban on hemp products in city advances

Ald. Marty Quinn listens to community members during a Chicago City Council hearing discussing a proposed hemp product sales ban on Wednesday. Quinn sponsored the proposed ban, deriding hemp shops as "shady operations" in opening remarks. Dominic Di Palermo/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

A broad ban on hemp products in Chicago advanced in the City Council Wednesday, teeing up a vote that could suddenly shutter the burgeoning industry.

Proponents argue the proposed ban would make Chicago safer by speeding up a pending congressional prohibition on the products that get users high. But Mayor Brandon Johnson's administration has urged aldermen to rework the ordinance with narrower regulations.

Hanging in the balance are dozens of small businesses like Rubina Mirza's Ukrainian Village shop, Kizmah CBD.

"This proposed ban on these products will put me out overnight and destroy all the hard work I spent with my family building a small business," Mirza told aldermen as the meeting started in a room packed with hemp supporters.

But a majority of the License and Consumer Protection Committee was unconvinced, as aldermen voted 10–6 to advance the ban. The full City Council could cast a final vote as soon as next Wednesday.

Southwest Side Ald. Marty Quinn, sponsor of the proposal, derided hemp shops as "shady operations" in opening remarks. And he shot down Johnson's calls for changes to the blanket ban, such as carveout to allow craft breweries selling hemp beverages to continue operating.

"These are weak and bad arguments no matter how you look at them," Quinn told aldermen before the vote. "There's a strong coalition behind this ordinance that can move it forward."

Ivan Capifali, Johnson's Business Affairs and Consumer Protections commissioner, countered that the city does not have the resources to effectively enforce a complete citywide shutdown of hemp product sales. It would also cost the city around $10 million in sales tax revenue and harm the industry that now helps support 10,000 jobs, according to Capifali's department.

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Downstate voters key to victory for Dems

In primary, credibility beyond Chicago and its suburbs is essential

U.S. Reps. Robin Kelly, from left, and Raja Krishnamoorthi and Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton stand after a candidate forum for their U.S. Senate race at IBEW Local 134 in Chicago on Nov. 13. Terrence Antonio James/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

An endorsement by a former one-term lieutenant governor who has been out of office for a decade ordinarily wouldn't hold much significance in a primary campaign for U.S. Senate.

But an endorsement from Sheila Simon might be a slight exception. Not because of the ex-lieutenant governor's individual political influence, but because, even as the Democratic voter base in downstate Illinois is ever-shrinking, her support highlights that statewide candidates must still spend considerable time and energy wooing party members far from deep-blue Cook County.

That's become particularly true in the Democratic Party's Senate primary campaign. All three major candidates in the race are from the Chicago region and are running to succeed retiring U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin of Springfield, who for the last 28 years has balanced an upstate-downstate split in Illinois' Senate representation.

Although ballots cast outside the six-county Chicago region accounted for less than a quarter of the overall vote in the past two contested Democratic Senate primaries, in 2010 and 2016, the announcement last week that Simon was backing U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi's candidacy serves as a reminder that all three top-tier candidates in the March 17 primary know building credibility beyond Chicago and its increasingly Democratic suburbs is essential.

Simon's backing does, of course, carry some modest political weight. Now a law professor at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, she's the daughter of the late U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, the man Durbin replaced in the Senate in 1997. She also remains a recognizable and well-connected figure in a region where her family name is tied to the identity and history of local Democratic politics.

Coming out on top of a primary field that currently stands at 14 candidates will require building a coalition of support that extends beyond Chicago and Cook County, said John Jackson, a visiting professor at SIU's Paul Simon Public Policy Institute.

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Residents, officials try to understand city's finances

South suburb is in midst of a prolonged fiscal crisis

Harvey Ald. Colby Chapman and Glynis James-Watson look through a spreadsheet of city expenditures Thursday at Chapman's 2nd Ward headquarters. Evy Lewis/Daily Southtown

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Harvey residents gathered at a Thursday discussion event hosted by Aldermen Colby Chapman and Tracy Key and City Treasurer Aisha Pickett to try to understand the city's opaque finances.

Pickett was elected in 2019 and reelected in 2023. She said throughout her time as treasurer, she has not been provided the necessary information to understand the city's financial situation and do her job.

"My tenure as treasurer has not been the easiest. As they mentioned before, there are things I don't necessarily have access to," Pickett said. "It makes my job very difficult."

Harvey is in the midst of a prolonged fiscal crisis. The city government has operated on reduced hours and severely cut staffing since October, when the City Council voted unanimously to apply for designation as a financially distressed city.

That designation would allow the city to receive state financial relief and oversight under the Illinois Financially Distressed City Law, with the state appointing a three-person board to oversee the city's finances. Only one Illinois city, East St. Louis, has previously received the status. Illinois does not otherwise have a mechanism in place for municipalities to declare bankruptcy.

Pickett expressed frustration, saying she felt she wasn't being allowed to serve the residents.

"I'm hoping that with this current situation, maybe some things will turn around. I'm hoping things will be more open, that they'll be more willing to work with us, because we are willing to do the work," Pickett said. "We just need some little cracks in the door."

Residents Glynis James-Watson and Amanda Askew assembled a spreadsheet compiling the various bills lists approved at City Council meetings over the past year to try to better understand the city's expenditures.

The City Council approved the most recent bills Oct.

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Ex-Cook County judge sentenced to probation after stealing from former Tuskegee Airman

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Former Cook County Judge Patricia Martin on Friday was sentenced to four years probation after she admitted to stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from the bank accounts of an elderly former Tuskegee Airman to purchase cryptocurrency.

Martin, 66, who previously served as presiding judge in the Child Protection Division of Cook County Circuit Court, pleaded guilty to one felony theft count, marking a quiet end to a legal saga that involved a lawsuit, a petition for criminal contempt of court, a $1.1 million default judgment and a disbarment.

The accusations against Martin, who retired from the judiciary in 2020, were first revealed in a lawsuit and attorney discipline complaint that alleged she took nearly $250,000 from the bank accounts of 95-year-old Oscar Wilkerson, a friend whose financial affairs she was supposed to manage.

In November 2020, a doctor who held a power of attorney for Wilkerson asked Martin, the niece of the man's former spouse, to help the doctor manage his affairs as they recommended he move to an elder care facility.

On Dec. 26, 2020, Martin, the complaint alleged, holding herself as his power of attorney, closed out two of the man's bank accounts, withdrawing $115,353.45. A few days later, Martin used the funds to purchase $110,000 in cryptocurrency in her own name.

Between February 2021 and October 2022, Martin used more of the man's money "without authority, to make additional cryptocurrency purchases for her own benefit, as well as towards her own personal purposes," the complaint said.

In July 2022, the senior living facility contacted the doctor to let him know that the man's bills had not been paid in about two months, and his account was more than $41,000 in arrears, according to the complaint.

After that, the facility terminated the man's residency.

Then, the doctor discovered the closed bank accounts with zero balances and hired an attorney.

The attorney corresponded for several weeks with Martin "without obtaining answers to his questions."

The attorney filed a civil claim in 2022, and a judge later ordered a default judgment of more than $1.1 million when Martin failed to respond to the allegations.

Wilkerson died on Feb. 8, 2023. A grand jury in 2023 indicted Martin on seven felony counts of theft, money laundering and financial exploitation of an elderly person.

Because of Martin's status as a former judge, the case was assigned to McHenry County Judge Tiffany Davis.

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Impasse means board unable to decide on school closures

The Evanston/Skokie School District 65 Board of Education convening on its Dec. 1 meeting. Richard Requena/ Pioneer Press

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The Evanston/Skokie School District 65 Board of Education reached an impasse again Monday, unable to make a decision on schools it will close on July 1. That complicates the district's efforts to cut costs and balance its budget, outlined in its Structural Deficit Reduction Plan.

The board members voted in much the same way they did in November, when they reached an impasse over closing Kingsley Elementary School and Lincolnwood Elementary School, or just Kingsley, at the end of this school year.

The board now faces uncertainty about whether it will be able to close any schools at the end of the school year, aside from the Dr. Bessie Rhodes School of Global Studies, a decision the district's administration says is necessary for the district's long-term financial goals.

District 65 board members Sergio Hernandez, Mya Wilkins and Andrew Wymer voted to close both Kingsley and Lincolnwood schools, but faced opposition from board members Maria Opdycke, Patricia Anderson and Nichole Pinkard, who voted to only close Kingsley.

When a motion to only close Kingsley was on the table, Opdycke, Anderson and Pinkard voted to close it, with the objections from Hernandez, Wilkins and Wymer blocking the board from committing to that scenario.

Part of the board's inability to reach a deciding vote comes from the resignation of board member Omar Salem, which came before the board took a vote on school closures. With the vacant Board seat, there have been multiple 3-3 votes that have stymied any action on future school closures.

A previous Board of Education voted in 2024 to close Bessie Rhodes on June 30, 2025.

The board has a Dec. 16 special Board of Education meeting to appoint a new member, who could potentially cast a tie-breaking vote on school closures.

Cook County property taxpayers to get another shot at appeals

Members of the Cook County Board of Review, Commissioners Larry Rogers Jr., speaks as George Cardenas leans over to listen to Chief Deputy Commissioner William O'Shields during an announcement of reopening previously closed townships for property tax appeals at the Cook County Board of Review offices in Chicago on Thursday. Antonio Perez/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Citing this year's record property tax hikes, the Cook County Board of Review is giving taxpayers another brief shot at knocking down their bills for next year.

Every Cook County township will reopen for appeals to property tax assessments, the county's estimate of a home or business' value, through Dec. 12.

Successful appeals won't offer any immediate relief on the bills that just landed, however. Any savings would apply to next year's second installment bills, which typically land in the summer. People who already appealed aren't eligible.

Taxpayers will have through Dec. 22 to submit accompanying evidence. Filing is free. It can be completed online, in-person at the county building or at one of a series of upcoming Board of Review events. Homeowner appeals do not require an attorney.

The latest round of tax bills, due Dec. 15, doubled for many South and West side homeowners, but fell for big commercial Loop buildings. The bills' arrival has fueled finger-pointing on the Chicago City Council and among county candidates who face primary voters in March.

All three commissioners on the board — two of whom are up for reelection — used a Thursday news conference to announce the additional appeal time to criticize Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi, who set the initial values of Chicago properties last year that ended up on this year's bills.

Commissioner Larry Rogers, a Kaegi adversary, said the assessor should issue mass corrections — called certificates of error — for neighborhoods such as North Lawndale and Englewood that saw significant assessment hikes. Those neighborhoods are also the least likely to appeal, a recent study from the county treasurer showed.

"Fritz Kaegi, with the stroke of a pen, can correct those valuations" by issuing those certificates, Rogers said, pointing to prior adjustments Kaegi made to assessments during the pandemic and in

Board taps reserves to cover $2.77 million deficit

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The Will County Board voted Thursday to use just over $2.77 million from its cash reserves to balance its budget for its 2026 fiscal year that started Monday.

The board voted 20-0 Thursday to reconcile its budget during a nearly two-hour special meeting after an unbalanced budget was approved two weeks ago.

While all board members present agreed to use cash reserves to close the gap, some members said they did so reluctantly because there was no other choice.

Last month, the board's Republican Caucus along with Democrat Destinee Ortiz, of Romeoville, approved no tax levy increase in a 12-10 vote. However, the budget on the agenda included a 1.75% levy. The two conflicting votes created the shortfall of nearly $2.8 million.

The owner of a home valued at about $250,000 would have paid an extra $7 to the county with the 1.75% levy, according to the county's supervisor of assessment's office.

"The County Board shouldn't be looting its cash reserves as a matter of practice to fill funding holes created by lazy and reckless financial planning," Speaker Joe VanDuyne, a Wilmington Democrat said. "It's bad accounting. It's bad government. It's bad business."

VanDuyne said the budget that was passed allowed for spending based on the 1.75% increase in the tax levy, but when the board cut the levy to zero on the County Board floor, it did so without considering the spending cuts necessary to balance the budget.

"The narrow majority that approved the budget did half the job and then walked away," VanDuyne said.

Finance Committee Chair Sherry Newquist, a Steger Democrat, agreed.

"I don't believe it's proper practice," she said. "I don't believe it's a good idea to use reserves to fill operational holes. However, we do need a balanced budget and I believe this is the only way forward for us at this point.

Newquist said she held special finance committees in the last few months where department heads presented their needs and board members could ask budget questions. She said they were "poorly attended."

Several board members disagreed on whose responsibility it was to find cuts to the budget. Some members said the board does not know the day-to-day expenses required of each office while others said it is the board members' duty to find cuts from the county executive's draft budget proposal that is released each August.

Other board members said the cash reserves on hand were more than the policy requires, so using the reserves made sense.

The approved resolution noted the county has about $94.8 million in cash reserves, which is about a $22 million surplus.

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Woman gets 30 years in daughter's neglect death

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

A Hobart woman got a 30-year prison sentence Thursday in a plea deal in the neglect death of her daughter.

Tiffany Jenkins, 34, pleaded guilty in September to neglect of a dependent resulting in death, a Level 1 felony.

Judge Salvador Vasquez rejected her first plea agreement in May for 20 years saying it was too lenient.

When Jenkins wept during that hearing, Vasquez said she failed the child.

"She should be crying," he said.

Police responded at 6:30 p.m. June 4, 2023, to the 600 block of Harvest Court in Crown Point for an unresponsive 2-year-old.

A toxicology report found Avia Jenkins had fentanyl in her system. An autopsy noted she had congested lungs with "foamy fluid" in her nose and mouth.

Paramedics tried to give the child naloxone to counteract the drugs.

Officers found the girl lying in a hallway. She didn't have a pulse and was "cold" to the touch.

Tiffany said she might have swallowed "mint extract," or something similar, the affidavit states.

The mother's DCS drug test was positive for drugs, including cocaine, THC and fentanyl. The case worker noted she was "mentioned" in 28 case files.

Post-Tribune archives contributed.

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Federal prosecutors subpoena Evanston for video of clash between agents, public

Evanston police body camera footage depicts the tense scene on Oct. 31 as officers attempt to separate residents from U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents. City of Evanston

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

A federal grand jury is investigating the chaos that ensued in Evanston after U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents detained three citizens after an Oct. 31 collision between the agents' SUV and a woman driving a red sedan, documents obtained in a records request show.

The city of Evanston received a subpoena from the U.S. Department of Justice on Nov. 4, ordering its Police Department to release vehicle accident reports, body camera video and any other recordings involving federal law enforcement officers and the public on Oct. 31. The subpoena also demanded that Evanston's police recordkeeper testify before a grand jury Nov. 19 at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse.

No charges have been filed.

The subpoena, signed by Assistant U.S. Attorney Shawn McCarthy, was addressed to the "Custodian of Records, Evanston Police Department," and ordered this person to appear in federal court. It also gave the person the option to submit the documents and video before that date, which Evanston police chose to do.

Just before 7:30 a.m. Nov. 6, Evanston police Sgt. Tom Giese emailed FBI Special Agent Chris Ryan to say that Evanston police Chief Schenita Stewart, Corporation Counsel Alexandra Ruggie and Giese would be driving down that day to FBI headquarters on Roosevelt Road in Chicago to turn over the documents in person, per the documents obtained through an open records request.

Grand juries operate in secrecy for the most part. In the Nov. 4 letter, McCarthy asked that the city not publicly disclose the subpoena because it could interfere with the investigation, but noted that they are not required to comply with his request.

A spokesperson for the U.S. attorney's office declined to comment on the grand jury proceedings. Likewise, Evanston officials declined to comment.

However, Evanston Mayor Daniel Biss, who is

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One Dem candidate removed from ballot, another reinstated

Koukol

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

A Will County Electoral Board ruled 2-1 Wednesday that Homer Glen resident Kevin Koukol cannot appear on the ballot for County Board District 4 after he incorrectly listed the wrong district on his statement of candidacy. He is considering appealing that decision.

A Will County judge ruled Friday Bolingbrook candidate Tyler Giacalone should be reinstated to the ballot for County Board District 11 after an Electoral Board removed him last month.

Eight out of the 11 County Board districts, with two representatives each, are up for election next year. Challenges have been heard during the last month to see which names will appear on the primary ballots for a chance to run in November.

District 4

Three people filed to run in the March 17 Democratic primary for District 4, which includes Homer Glen, Mokena and portions of Lockport, New Lenox, Tinley Park and Orland Park. Voters select two candidates from the Republican and Democratic primaries who will vie for two seats in the November election.

Candidate Sheri Boniecki-Cooling challenged the petitions for Koukol and William Pratt. After a hearing last month, Pratt was found to have enough eligible signatures to appear on the primary ballot.

But the Electoral Board, made up of Will County Treasurer Tim Brophy, Circuit Court Clerk Andrea Lynn Chasteen and Assistant State's Attorney Scott Pyles, ruled that Koukol writing on his candidacy papers that he was running for District 6 instead of District 4 was enough of an error to be removed from the ballot.

The Will County clerk's office notified Mark Garwon, a former Homer Township trustee who was turning in the petition papers on Koukol's behalf, that Koukol wrote the wrong district on the papers. The papers had been notarized, and Garwon crossed off the 6 and wrote the correct district, 4, on the papers before submitting them.

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Park Forest police Officer Tim Jones dies nearly a decade after shooting

Park Forest police Officer Timothy Jones, shot in the line of duty in March 2016, on his release from Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital in Wheaton on May 26, 2017. Zak Koeske/Daily Southtown

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Tim Jones, a Park Forest police officer and the son of former Country Club Hills police Chief William Jones, died Wednesday, nearly 10 years after he was shot multiple times in a nearly deadly confrontation with an intruder in a vacant house.

Jones, then 24, and a member of the Police Department for less than one year, suffered bullet wounds to his head and neck during an exchange of gunfire in which the trespasser, Thurman Reynolds, was killed.

Jones survived after undergoing numerous surgeries before leaving a rehab facility more than one year after the shooting.

The announcement of his death was made in an online posting Thursday morning by Park Forest police Chief Brian Rzyski, who wrote that "while our hearts are broken we remain incredibly proud of the fight he gave."

Rzyski wrote funeral arrangements were not finalized but would be shared with the community when announced.

The saga of Tim Jones almost defies belief.

Almost immediately after the shooting, Jones was flown to Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn where he was put in a coma to relieve swelling on the brain, a condition for which doctors told the family that there was little or no hope.

William Jones said one doctor told them he had "never seen anyone wake up from something like this" and another opined that the odds of winning the Powerball were better than Tim living one more day.

Yet Tim Jones clung to life. Day by day, one operation after another, he gradually gained strength. After one more operation around Easter of that year, William Jones said his son's eyes were open.

"They were staring and blinking at me," he said.

Less than a week after the shooting, thousands of

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Nun once arrested during her years of service to immigrants

Sister Pat Murphy, center, and Sister Joann Persch, right, participate in a prayer service for immigrants outside the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement holding facility in Broadview on Dec. 6, 2024. Murphy died in July at age 96. Stacey Wescott/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Sister JoAnn Persch was a nun who spent 18 years serving and praying with Chicago-area immigrants and refugees detained by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency at the Broadview processing facility, as part of a lifetime devoted to serving the less fortunate.

"She wanted to respond to the suffering of people and especially the immigrants who needed so much help," said Sister Rita Specht, a longtime friend and fellow Chicago-based Sisters of Mercy nun who joined Persch in praying for migrants at the ICE processing facility. "She was tenacious and was very committed."

Persch, 91, died of a thoracic aorta dissection on Nov. 14 at OSF Little Company of Mary Medical Center in Chicago, said Bob Keenan, a spokesman for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas order. Persch had been an Alsip resident.

Born in Milwaukee in 1934, Persch graduated from Mercy High School in Milwaukee and entered the Sisters of Mercy in Des Plaines shortly after she turned 18 in 1952. She earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from Chicago's St. Xavier College, and then earned a master's degree in religious education from Loyola University Chicago.

Persch took her perpetual vows, or final vows, with the Sisters of Mercy in 1958. She began her career by teaching in Catholic schools in Wisconsin and Chicago, including a three-year stint from 1959 until 1962 instructing pupils in Fox Point, Wisconsin, outside her hometown of Milwaukee. While there, she met a future partner in ministry to migrants and refugees, Sister Pat Murphy, who soon moved to Peru to become a missionary.

Persch later taught school in the Chicago area, and she reconnected with Murphy after Murphy moved back to Chicago from Peru in 1969. In the 1980s, the duo ministered at Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly. Both had been drawn to the Sisters of Mercy because of the order's responsiveness to the surrounding world, and they had a longstanding bond owing to their mutual deep call to justice, Persch told the Tribune earlier this year

ON DEC. 7 ...

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

ON DEC. 7 ...

In 1787, Delaware became the first state to ratify the Constitution.

In 1863 retailer R.W. Sears, co-founder of Sears, Roebuck & Co., was born in Stewartville, Minn.

In 1941 Japanese forces attacked American and British territories and possessions in the Pacific, including the home base of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

In 1972 America's last moon mission to date was launched as Apollo 17 blasted off from Cape Canaveral.

In 1993 a gunman opened fire on a Long Island Rail Road commuter train in New York, killing six people and wounding 17.

In 1995 a 746-pound probe from the Galileo spacecraft hurtled into Jupiter's atmosphere, sending back data to the mothership before it was presumably destroyed.

In 2004 Hamid Karzai was sworn in as Afghanistan's first popularly elected president.

In 2017 Minnesota Democrat Al Franken announced he would resign his U.S. Senate seat amid sexual misconduct allegations.

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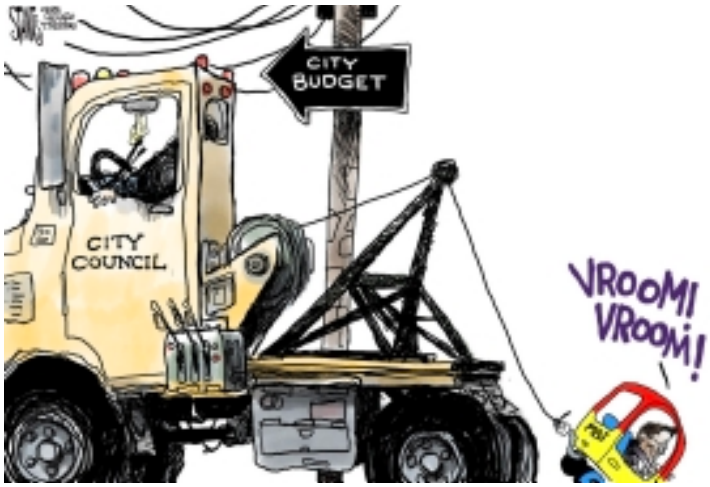
Johnson's game of budgetary chicken puts Chicago's future at risk



Scott Stantis/for the chicago tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Buckle up, Chicago. Mayor Brandon Johnson is running the Hail Mary play, both for Chicago's finances and his political future.

The mayor's lengthy response on Thursday to an alternative budget framework put forth by 26 aldermen last week was an exercise in political irresponsibility. The mayor's team dismissed virtually all of the suggestions the majority of the council made and came back with almost no alternative proposals of their own. And the mayor's cheering section, the Chicago Teachers Union, decided, appallingly, to engage in the politics of personal destruction naming "The Alders willing to shutdown our city," suggesting they will provide backup if Johnson digs in sufficiently for Chicago's own version of a federal government shutdown. Be very afraid of that.

If nothing else, this budget season has exposed as fiction the mayor's repeated claim of being more collaborative than his predecessors when it comes to relations with the City Council. In the past, Johnson's "collaboration," such as it's been, has been born of necessity as much as anything else — a consequence of a divisive brand of politics that has sapped aldermanic confidence in his leadership. It's not surprising that any pretense to give-and-take is on the shelf now that we're fast approaching election season in Chicago.

But it is dismaying. And, if you care about Chicago's future, very worrying.

Long after a majority of alders made it clear they wouldn't support reviving the city's corporate head tax, Johnson's insistence on a monthly $21 tax on each worker at businesses employing 100 or more is beginning to put Chicago in truly perilous territory when it comes to its finances.

Team Johnson estimates that tax would generate $100 million; the city's budget gap is $1.2 billion. A head tax would crush whatever remaining confidence companies and investors have in Chicago as a healthy place to do business. There are clear alternatives to that much-despised levy, but we're not in the realm of logic and practicality

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{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

“Anytime you get a chance to feed a city, you want to do it.”

— Ben Johnson on his shirtless celebration of the Bears win

“This whole ideology with Chicago, I feel it. You love your city. I get it. You’re passionate about that. I understand better now.”

— Darren Bailey, remembering pushback he received from calling Chicago a “hellhole”

“We know this is not about peace. It’s about business.”

— Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk

“We need to have serious discussions here about what’s going to come out of the budget, because right now he does not have a majority. We do.”

— Ald. Scott Waguespack, 32nd on Chicago budget negotiations

“Our court is not merely a collection of buildings and procedures. It is the vital mechanism of which our community resolves its deepest conflicts and upholds its most cherished ideals.”

— Charles Beach, new chief judge of Cook County

“We will restore tradition, and I’m eager to earn the trust of our players, alumni and fans while competing at the highest level.”

— Pat Fitzgerald, Michigan State football coach

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Somalis should be welcome in US. But not those who commit crimes en masse

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Most Americans are sick and tired of the kind of reactionary politics that does nothing to stop people stealing taxpayers' hard-earned money. Take, for example, the circle-the-wagons responses to the scandal involving likely hundreds of Somali immigrants and descendants in Minnesota and the theft of more than a billion dollars from that state's famously generous social safety nets over about the last five years.

The crime ring here involved an outrageously widespread scheme to defraud Minnesota's Medicaid Housing Stabilization Services program through the creation of dubious nonprofit entities (such as one called Feeding Our Future) that could sign up individuals and then bill the state for social service work they never actually did for those folks, thereby allowing nefarious connected individuals to pocket the loot. Reportedly, more than 86 defendants, almost all of Somali origin and many with U.S. residency or citizenship, have been charged, with some 60 already given felony convictions. But this widely ignored story (nationally, at least) only gained national traction in the last couple of weeks once those with pre-existing narratives found the right fit.

The right realized several things. Here was an effective way to remind voters of the Democrats' poorly managed money-spill at the tail end of the COVID-19 crisis and to attach blame for this scandal to Tim Walz, the state's governor and recent vice presidential candidate, perhaps knocking him out of any future in national politics. The scandal also targeted one of the left's most absurd and easily correctable weaknesses: a reluctance to call out crime when doing so might cause the whistleblower to be called a racist. So what if real harm is being done?

Here there were clear echoes of a yet-worse scheme in the U.K. that involved the sexual abuse of hundreds of young, working-class British girls mostly by older Pakistani men, even as the authorities downplayed the scale of the abuse and soft-pedaled investigations for years, apparently due to a reluctance to sow "community" discord. Everyone in Britain now knows the country failed those girls.

On the naturally defensive left, the Minnesota story was seen as necessitating firing back. Not against the crimes, but against anti-immigrant jingoism, as writ large by Donald Trump's enraged and highly offensive statement that denigrated Somali immigrants as "garbage" and suggested they shouldn't be in the country, declaring, "we're going to go the wrong way if we keep taking in garbage into our country." That's why Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey was breaking bread for the cameras with Somali Americans this past week, even as Trump was fuming about kicking them all out of the country. For his part, Walz said he has put in new safeguards. But he seemed to rage not against the unfathomable duration of the billion-dollar crime spree, which he said "was stopping," but against Trump's reactive tirade, a justifiable target but also much easier than cleaning out his own house.

These are the words and actions of political leaders worried about the next election. We think most Americans understand what happened here and why, as well what is and is not appropriate to say and do.

They know Trump was wrong to denigrate an entire country as scofflaws and criminals, just as he was to imply that a majority of Somali Americans in Minnesota were part of this scheme. (There were hardly

It’s time to rebuild the Republican Party, not rename it

President Donald Trump attends a Cabinet meeting at the White House on Tuesday in Washington. Trump recently commented about renaming the Republican Party after himself. Julia Demaree Nikhinson/AP

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

President Donald Trump’s recent comments about renaming the Republican Party after him raises the question of whether this might be the spark that ignites a serious reconsideration of just what the Republican Party stands for and what the future holds for the party. Some will write off Trump’s ruminations about changing the name to “Tpublican” or some other bastardized version as another of his egomaniacal rants to distract the media from learning about playboy Trump’s earlier years with Jeffrey Epstein.

Yet, few believed Trump would tear down the entire East Wing of the White House to create a Mar-a-Lago North. This is the American president who has plastered the Oval Office with gold, now converted to the Trump family cash register with real estate deals and crypto scams ringing up sales for the billionaire family. Most Americans would not expect a sitting president to approve a new dollar coin with his portrait on it, but it is in the planning stages. There seems no end to Trump disgracing the office of the presidency with his monumental ego and tacky taste.

With the latest Gallup poll showing Trump and his party in trouble, with only 36% of Americans approving of his job performance, fair-weather Republicans and independents who voted for Trump in 2024 because he wasn’t Kamala Harris may reconsider their vote for Republicans in the future. There are already signs of dissent at the polls with the recent elections of Democratic governors in New Jersey and Virginia.

The stakes are high for the Grand Old Party. Republicans are also in danger of losing control of Congress in the 2026 midterm elections with the economy worsening daily while Trump becomes the first president refusing to release basic economic data on job losses and inflation. There are already signs from the Senate Republican majority that Trump’s behavior can no longer be ignored. In response to Trump’s efforts to convince Senate Republicans to kill the filibuster, Republican Senate Majority Leader John Thune stiffed Trump and said there weren’t enough Senate Republicans willing to

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What Democrats can learn from the British left under Thatcher

Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher holds up a one-pound note to the press to illustrate the devaluation and inflation of the note as she canvasses during the general election in London on April 2, 1979. Geoff Bruce/Central Press/Getty

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

U.S. politics this coming year will be defined by the midterm elections, and if current trends continue, Democrats could take back Congress.

According to recent Marist polling, Democrats lead by 14 points on the national ballot question, while President Donald Trump's approval rating is at a new low of 36%.

The question is whether, and how, Democrats can keep the momentum going to turn out voters.

There are lessons to be learned from November's elections. That both progressives and moderates swept to victory might suggest that the way to go for Democrats in 2026 is to build a bigger tent to successfully navigate the choppy waters of a polarized electorate. But the real lesson of 2025 is that voters want a compelling alternative to the kind of politics that have made a safe, dignified and joyful life increasingly impossible for many people across the country.

Just think of New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's campaign, which was a master class in uncompromising and unapologetic concern for all people that emphasized people's real concerns about affordability. Or consider Virginia Gov.-elect Abigail Spanberger's emphasis on her competence and ability to address the high cost of living, rather than running on a platform of opposition to Trump.

This is not a new approach. In an influential 1979 article, the British cultural theorist Stuart Hall offered a diagnosis of the rise of the British new right and Labour's inability to mount a defense. His analysis holds important insights for the current political moment in the United States.

In the midst of economic crisis, Margaret Thatcher was able to generate popular support for economic policies that hurt most ordinary Brits. Hall examined why British social democrats failed to stop what he aptly called "the great moving right show."

According to Hall, Thatcher's genius was to amplify people's fears of economic loss and downward

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When policing becomes political, public safety suffers

Chicago police watch as federal officers detain people while members of the community and activists protest near the 3900 block of South Kedzie Avenue on Oct. 4. Armando L. Sanchez/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Over the past few months, a troubling pattern has emerged across America's major cities. As President Donald Trump's administration dispatches federal agents and National Guard troops to jurisdictions — often over the objections of local residents and leaders — police departments are being forced to navigate an increasingly precarious position. If they embrace federal intervention, they risk being seen as acting against the will of the communities they serve. If they fail to align with Washington's agenda, they invite political backlash for not showing unquestioning loyalty to the "thin blue line" that unites law enforcement.

This no-win situation is yet another symptom of the growing politicization of law enforcement and public safety. And as a retired police lieutenant who spent more than two decades on the force, I see this trend as an existential threat to the legitimacy our profession relies on to be effective.

Anyone who has worked in this field knows that policing can only function through community trust and cooperation. Our ability to uphold safety depends on the public's belief that police are there to protect them — not to serve as an occupying force or an arm of political power. Federal encroachment on local policing blurs that line, creating a tightrope act that's proving difficult for departments to balance.

In the Chicago area, federal law enforcement's heavy-handed tactics have put local police directly in the crossfire, both literally and figuratively. After federal agents repeatedly deployed tear gas in residential neighborhoods — exposing at least 40 Chicago police officers and countless bystanders — a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order blocking the use of certain types of force against protesters. In nearby Broadview, federal agents have also tear-gassed local police officers outside an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility that has drawn regular protests. The village's police chief has accused ICE agents of making false police reports, and his department has opened at least three criminal investigations into incidents involving ICE agents.

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What about CPD? • Impacts of data centers • How US moves freight • We need peace here •

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

What about CPD?

In the last mayoral election, Chicagoans were presented with two options: Vote for Brandon Johnson and allow the Chicago Teachers Union to run the city or for Paul Vallas and have the city run by the police union.

Well, Johnson is not working out very well, but Vallas' Dec. 4 op-ed "What can be done to restore faith in Chicago's justice system?" shows why his election would not necessarily have been a better choice.

Vallas describes what he calls a "revolving door of criminality" and says it is "a financial disaster." He correctly states that "Chicago has spent over a billion dollars on police-related settlements and judgments." He then decries the SAFE-T Act and the federal consent decree, writing that they create "more lucrative paths" for suing the police and the city. Nowhere does he mention that the vast amounts in police-related settlements and judgments are due to actual police criminal activity, such as what former Chicago police Cmdr. Jon Burge and former Sgt. Ronald Watts were involved in and the murder of Laquan McDonald, and police misconduct, such as the horrific arrest of Anjanette Young. And such felonious activities have been allowed to continue. The code of silence protects officers from discovery and prosecution.

Vallas lays the blame not on the Chicago Police Department but on those who would make it easier to sue the police and the city. Want to reduce the amount spent on settlements and judgments? How about subtracting that money from police salaries? Then officers might have an incentive not to violate laws or look the other way when criminal activity by their peers occurs.

Vallas notes that the clearance rate for nonfatal shootings was around 6% when last reported. He then cites the justice system's use of "electronic monitoring or nominal court supervision." It is unclear what this has to do with CPD"s clearance rate.

Studies have shown that CPD's clearance rates for such crimes as homicide and aggravated assault are among the lowest in the nation. Is it any wonder? Until the reputation of CPD improves, we cannot expect CPD's clearance rates to get much higher. The relationship between CPD and the citizens in the communities where most of these types of crimes occur is such that people are not willing to assist the CPD in its investigations. The problem is not with the people, but with the department.

One way to restore faith in Chicago's justice system is to insist on a better police department.

— David Grossman, former chief investigator, Chicago Police Department, Office of Professional Standards, Chicago

Impacts of data centers

Illinois policymakers have entered a pivotal window to determine how data centers will impact our electric grid. The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is weighing proposed changes to ComEd's rate structure,

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‘Twins, Dolls, or Hoax?’

‘Sawdust Babies’ murder trial of 1922 spread confusion in Hammond

Hazel McNally smiles while on trial in October 1922, accused of murdering her twin babies, according to her husband, Frank McNally. Hazel McNally insisted there were no real children, only dolls she pretended were her newborns. Chicago Tribune historical photo

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Hazel McNally laughed as a prosecutor described how she brutally murdered her infant twins.

She “laughed uproariously” as witnesses and lawyers sniped, she “snickered” at grieving family and had a “twinkle of merriment return to her eyes” as her husband described how she would pelt him with plates and shoes, according to a Chicago Tribune report.

“While Frank McNally, her 55 year old husband accuser, sat with glum face, alternately glaring at a witness and glancing away towards a nearby window, Mrs. McNally, just 26 and jauntily dressed, snickered behind her gloved hand as his son, Lloyd, told how tenderly the ‘father’ had carried one of the ‘dummy twins,’ ” the Oct. 19, 1922, Tribune said.

For three days in 1922, Hammond hosted a murder trial that captivated and confused the nation. Autoworker Frank McNally had accused his wife of killing their children — Laurene Hazel McNally and her twin brother, Lauren Frank McNally — and disposing of their bodies.

The mother’s defense? The babies she nursed, walked around Hammond in a stroller, took to Chicago on shopping trips and kept under a veil in a darkened room for ill-defined health reasons were actually two doll heads she attached to baby clothes and stuffed with straw.

“‘Doll Murder’ Dazes Court” a Tribune headline blared. Los Angeles Times’ front page begged “Twins, Dolls, or Hoax?” as the New York Times tucked its coverage inside under “Amusements.” Locally, papers dubbed it the “Twin-Doll Mystery,” the “Phantom Twins” or, in alliteration from the South Bend Tribune, “The Sensational ‘Sawdust Babies’ Affair.”

Monday would have been Lauren and Laurene McNally’s 104rd birthday, if they existed.

Tribune reports and records from the Indiana State Library and South Bend Historical Society showed how the case played out.

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DOJ plays up arrest in DC bomb case

But Jan. 6 violence at US Capitol often goes unmentioned

Insurrectionists loyal to President Donald Trump breach the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. John Minchillo/AP

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

WASHINGTON — After the arrest of a man charged with placing two pipe bombs outside the headquarters of the Republican and Democratic national parties on Jan. 5, 2021, the warning from the Trump administration was clear: If you come to the nation's capital to attack citizens and institutions of democracy, you will be held accountable.

Yet Justice Department leaders who announced the arrest were silent about the violence that had taken place when supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol and clashed with police one day after those bombs were discovered.

It was the latest example of the Trump's administration's effort to rewrite the history of the riot, through pardons and the firings of lawyers who prosecuted the participants of the siege, and of the disconnect for a government that prides itself for cracking down on violent crime and supporting law enforcement but has papered over the brutality of the Jan. 6 attacks on police officers.

"The administration has ignored and attempted to whitewash the violence committed by rioters on Jan. 6 because they were the president's supporters. They were trying to install him a second time against the will of the voters in 2020," said Michael Romano, who prosecuted the rioters before leaving the Justice Department this year. "And it feels like the effort to ignore that is purely transactional."

The White House referred comment to the Justice Department, which referred comment to the FBI.

FBI Director Kash Patel, as a conservative podcast host during the Biden administration, had called the Jan. 6 rioters "political prisoners" and offered to represent them for free. But on Thursday, he said the arrest of the pipe bomb suspect, Brian Cole Jr., 30, was in keeping with Trump's commitment to "secure our nation's capital."

"When you attack American citizens, when you attack our institutions of legislation, when you attack the nation's capital, you attack the very being of our way of life," Patel said. "And this FBI and this Department of Justice stand here to tell you that we

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Justices weigh increasing power of the presidency

High court to review ruling that conflicts with Trump's firings

A worker shovels snow and ice Friday in front of the Supreme Court building in Washington. The justices are scheduled to hear a landmark case Monday. Mark Schiefelbein/AP

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

WASHINGTON — Chief Justice John Roberts has led the Supreme Court's conservative majority on a steady march of increasing the power of the presidency, starting well before Donald Trump's time in the White House.

The justices could take the next step in a case being argued Monday that calls for a unanimous 90-year-old decision limiting executive authority to be overturned.

The court's conservatives, liberal Justice Elena Kagan noted in September, seem to be "raring to take that action."

They already have allowed Trump, in the opening months of the Republican's second term, to fire almost everyone he has wanted, despite the court's 1935 decision in Humphrey's Executor that prohibits the president from removing the heads of independent agencies without cause.

The officials include Rebecca Slaughter, whose firing from the Federal Trade Commission is at issue in the current case, as well as officials from the National Labor Relations Board, the Merit Systems Protection Board and the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The only officials who have survived efforts to remove them are Lisa Cook, a Federal Reserve governor, and Shira Perlmutter, a copyright official with the Library of Congress. The court already has suggested that it will view the Fed differently from other independent agencies, and Trump has said he wants Cook out because of allegations of mortgage fraud. She says she did nothing wrong.

Humphrey's Executor has long been a target of the conservative legal movement that has embraced an expansive view of presidential power known as the unitary executive.

The case before the high court involves the same agency, the FTC, that was at issue in 1935. The justices established that presidents — Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt at the time — could not fire the appointed leaders of the alphabet soup of federal

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Calif. issues wild mushroom warning after deadly outbreak

Death cap mushrooms are often mistaken for edible ones. California Department of Health

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

California officials are warning foragers after an outbreak of poisoning linked to wild mushrooms that has killed one adult and caused severe liver damage in several patients, including children.

The state poison control system has identified 21 cases of amatoxin poisoning, likely caused by death cap mushrooms, the health department said Friday. The toxic wild mushrooms are often mistaken for edible ones because of their appearance and taste.

"Death cap mushrooms contain potentially deadly toxins that can lead to liver failure," Erica Pan, director of the California Department of Public Health, said in a statement. "Because the death cap can easily be mistaken for edible safe mushrooms, we advise the public not to forage for wild mushrooms at all during this high-risk season."

One adult has died and several patients have required intensive care, including at least one who might need a liver transplant.

Wet weather fuels the growth of death cap mushrooms, and officials warn against any wild mushroom foraging to avoid confusion. Residents in central California's Monterey County became ill after eating mushrooms found in a local park, according to county health officials. Another cluster of cases were in the San Francisco Bay Area, but state health officials warned that the risk is everywhere.

There were more than 4,500 cases of exposure to unidentified mushrooms logged at America's Poison Centers in 2023, according to the National Poison Data System annual report. Roughly half were in children, who experts warn may pick and eat a mushroom while playing outside.

The death cap mushroom and the "destroying angel" mushroom look and taste similar to edible mushrooms, so experts warn that a mushroom's color is not a reliable way of detecting its toxicity. And whether it is eaten raw or cooked does not matter.

People can have stomach cramping, nausea,

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Threats pile up against Indiana GOP

Trump, allies press senators to redraw congressional map

Annette Groos rallies against a GOP redistricting push Sept. 18 at the Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis. Michael Conroy/AP

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Spencer Deery's son was getting ready for school when someone tried to provoke police into swarming his home by reporting a fake emergency.

Linda Rogers said there were threats at her home and the golf course that her family has run for generations.

Jean Leising faced a pipe bomb scare that was emailed to local law enforcement.

The three are among roughly a dozen Republicans in the Indiana Senate who have seen their lives turned upside down while President Donald Trump pushes to redraw the state's congressional map to expand the party's power in the 2026 midterm elections.

It's a bewildering and frightening experience for lawmakers who consider themselves loyal party members and never imagined they would be doing their jobs under the same shadow of violence that has darkened American political life in recent years.

Redistricting is normally done once a decade after a new national census. Trump wants to accelerate the process in hopes of protecting the Republicans' thin majority in the U.S. House next year. His allies in Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio and Texas have already gone along with his plans for new political lines.

Now Trump's campaign faces its greatest test yet in a stubborn pocket of Midwestern conservatism. Although Indiana Gov. Mike Braun and the House of Representatives are on board, the proposal may fall short with senators who value their civic traditions and independence over what they fear would be short-term partisan gain.

"When you have the president of the United States and your governor sending signals, you want to listen to them," said Rogers, who has not declared her position on the redistricting push. "But it doesn't mean you'll compromise your values."

On Friday, Trump posted a list of senators who "need encouragement to make the right decision,"

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Gaza truce reaches 'critical moment,' Qatari leader says

A Palestinian girl carries a bag of bread Saturday under the first phase of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. BASHAR TALEB/Getty-AFP

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

DOHA, Qatar — Qatar's prime minister on Saturday said the Gaza ceasefire has reached a "critical moment" as its first phase winds down, with the remains of one Israeli hostage still to be handed over by militants.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told a conference in the Qatari capital that international mediators, led by the U.S., are working "to force the way forward" to the second phase to cement the deal.

"What we have just done is a pause," he told the Doha Forum. "We cannot consider it yet a ceasefire."

He added: "A ceasefire cannot be completed unless there is a full withdrawal of Israeli forces, there is stability back in Gaza, people can go in and out, which is not the case today."

While the ceasefire halted the heavy fighting of the two-year war, Gaza health officials say that more than 360 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the truce took effect Oct. 10.

In new violence, two Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike northwest of Gaza City, Shifa Hospital said.

Israel's army said it wasn't aware of an airstrike in that location. However, it said that Israeli soldiers Saturday killed three militants who crossed the "yellow line" into Israeli- controlled northern part of Gaza and "posed an immediate threat."

The Israeli army has said it has carried out a number of attacks on Palestinians crossing the ceasefire line.

Under the first phase of President Donald Trump's 20-point peace plan, the fighting stopped and dozens of hostages held in Gaza were exchanged for hundreds of Palestinians held in Israeli prison. Israel sent a delegation last week to Egypt for talks on returning the remains of the last hostage.

The next phase has not begun. It includes the deployment of an international security force in Gaza, formation of a new technocratic government for the territory, disarmament of Hamas and an

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Russia strikes Ukraine with air attack amid Florida talks

A sea drone that Ukrainian forces use against Russian targets takes off Saturday in Ukraine. Efrem Lukatsky/AP

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia unleashed a major missile and drone barrage on Ukraine overnight into Saturday, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he had a "substantive phone call" with American officials engaged in talks with a Ukrainian delegation in Florida, aimed at ending the nearly 4-year war.

Russia used 653 drones and 51 missiles in the wide-reaching overnight attack on Ukraine, which triggered air raid alerts across the country and came as Ukraine marked Armed Forces Day, the country's air force said Saturday.

Ukrainian forces shot down and neutralized 585 drones and 30 missiles, the air force said, adding that 29 locations were struck.

At least eight people were wounded in the attacks, Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs Ihor Klymenko said. Among these, at least three people were wounded in the Kyiv region, according to local officials. Drone sightings were reported as far west as Ukraine's Lviv region.

Russia carried out a "massive missile-drone attack" on power stations and other energy infrastructure in several Ukrainian regions, Ukraine's national energy operator, Ukrenergo, wrote on Telegram.

Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant temporarily lost all off-site power overnight, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Saturday, citing its Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi. The plant is in an area that has been under Russian control since early in Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and is not in service, but it needs reliable power to cool its six shutdown reactors and spent fuel, to avoid any catastrophic nuclear incidents.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that energy facilities were the main targets of the attacks, also noting that a drone strike had "burned down" the train station in the city of Fastiv, located in the Kyiv region.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said its air defenses had shot down 116 Ukrainian drones over Russian

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Shark nets stir waters down under

Some experts warn devices not best way to keep people safe

Surfers ride on a big wave Sept. 19 as the sun rises over Bondi Beach in Sydney. Australia is a hot spot for shark attacks. Saeed KHAN/GETTY-AFP

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Hauling his surfboard up a walkway at Sydney's Bondi Beach, Mat Chin said he did not think nets strung beneath the waves were doing anything to keep surfers like him safe from sharks.

At the same time, he said, "it just feels more comforting to know they're there."

Australia is one of only a few countries to use shark nets, a contentious form of beach protection. Some experts say the nets aren't the best way to keep people safe — and that they trap and kill an unnecessary number of other marine creatures.

Officials in New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, had planned to begin removing nets at three beaches as part of a pilot program. But when a surfer was killed by a shark at a Sydney beach in September, that plan was put on hold. Then, last month, a swimmer was killed by a shark at a remote beach a few hours north.

All of that has reignited a long-running debate over how best to keep surfers and swimmers safe.

Some beachgoers want the nets gone. That includes Ernie Garland, 52, a veteran surfer and swimmer.

"Shark nets are a very antiquated form of protection," he said at Bondi Beach hours after the most recent shark attack, sitting on a shoreline crowded with swimmers, surfers and sunbathers.

But for Chin, 18, and some other beachgoers, skepticism about the nets' effectiveness runs up against an instinctive discomfort about removing them.

"We already have cases of shark attacks with the nets," Barbara Satie, 25, said during an interview at Bondi. "If we take the nets out, maybe we'd have more."

Australia is a hot spot for shark attacks, along with the United States.

Fatal attacks are extremely rare, but Australia has done more than perhaps any other country to try to mitigate them.

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Could GLP-1 drugs make fat cats Ozempets?

Company launches study on medicines' benefits for felines

This house cat in Boulder, Colorado, put on weight during the pandemic. Stephen Speranza/The New York Times 2022

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

In just a few short years, new diabetes and weight loss drugs like Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro have taken the world by storm. In the United States, 1 in 8 adults say they've tried one of these medications, which are known as GLP-1 drugs, and that number seems sure to rise as prices fall and new oral formulations hit the market.

Fluffy and Fido could be next.

On Tuesday, Okava Pharmaceuticals, a biopharmaceutical company based in San Francisco, announced that it has officially begun a pilot study of a GLP-1 drug for cats with obesity. The company is testing a novel approach: Instead of receiving weekly injections of the drugs, as has been common in human patients, the cats will get small, injectable implants, slightly larger than a microchip, that will slowly release the drug for as long as six months.

"You insert that capsule under the skin, and then you come back six months later, and the cat has lost the weight," said Dr. Chen Gilor, a veterinarian at the University of Florida, who is leading the study. "It's like magic."

Results are expected next summer. If they are promising, they could represent the next frontier for a class of drugs that has upended human medicine and a potentially transformative treatment option for millions of pets.

Some veterinarians have already begun administering human GLP-1 drugs, off label, to diabetic cats, and Okava is not the only company developing a product specifically for companion animals.

"I think this is going to be the next big thing," said Dr. Ernie Ward, a veterinarian and the founder of the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention. Veterinarians, he added, are "on the precipice of a complete new era in obesity medicine."

Ward has provided informal, unpaid advice to Okava and several other companies interested in developing GLP-1 drugs for pets, but does not have

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Statues made for walking?

Study posits the monolithic stone figures on Easter Island were rocked into place

Ahu Tahai stands on the coast of Easter Island, Chile. Scholars have debated how the massive stone figures of Rapa Nui got to where they stand today. Josh Haner/The New York Times 2017

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

You could say Rapa Nui is in the middle of nowhere, but it's even less central than that. Moored in the empty South Pacific, this barren outcrop of land, also known as Easter Island, is some 1,300 miles southeast of its closest inhabited neighbor and about 2,200 miles west of mainland Chile.

For centuries, scholars have been puzzled by the movement of the Rapa Nui moai, monolithic stone figures that represent deified ancestors. Between A.D. 1200 and 1700, the statues were hewed from compacted ash in a quarry inside the crater of the extinct volcano Rano Raraku, and then transported as far as 11 miles across rugged terrain; some reached 33 feet in height and weighed as much as 86 tons.

Roughly 950 moai have been discovered on the island. Most face inland with their backs to the ocean to watch over the villages, but seven on the west-oriented slopes of the Terevaka volcano are positioned to precisely face the sunset during the equinoxes, suggesting that the site once served as an astronomical observatory.

About 400 moai are still in the quarry, and 62 lie on the ground between the quarry and ceremonial platforms along the coast. All these numbers are hotly debated, as is the question of whether the 62 moai were abandoned in transit or purposely left at their sites.

In a recent study published in The Journal of Archaeological Science, Carl Lipo of Binghamton University and Terry Hunt of the University of Arizona demonstrated a plausible technique for how the statues were moved.

Fourteen years ago, the researchers' 18-person crew shimmied a 4.35-ton concrete replica over a 328-foot distance in just 40 minutes by using ropes attached to the sculpture's head, causing it to rock and shift its weight from side to side with each tug, gradually advancing it forward. This experiment called into question existing theories about moai transport and reinforced ones proposed in Lipo and Hunt's 2011 book "The Statues That Walked: Unraveling the Mystery of Easter Island."

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Defense chief defends US military strikes on suspected drug boats

Heavenly sounds: Pop singer Michael Bublé performs Saturday during the Concert with the Poor in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican. Pope Leo XIV welcomed artists, volunteers, guests and even joined the audience for the show. Andrew Medichini/AP

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth defended strikes on alleged drug cartel boats during remarks Saturday at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, saying President Donald Trump has the power to take military action "as he sees fit" to defend the nation.

Hegseth dismissed criticism of the strikes, which have killed more than 80 people and now face intense scrutiny over concerns that they violated international law. Saying the strikes are justified to protect Americans, Hegseth likened the fight to the war on terror following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"If you're working for a designated terrorist organization and you bring drugs to this country in a boat, we will find you and we will sink you. Let there be no doubt about it," Hegseth said during his keynote address at the Reagan National Defense Forum. "President Trump can and will take decisive military action as he sees fit to defend our nation's interests. Let no country on earth doubt that for a moment."

The most recent strike brings the death toll of the campaign to at least 87 people. Lawmakers have sought more answers about the attacks and their legal justification, and whether U.S. forces were ordered to launch a follow-up strike following a September attack even after the Pentagon knew of survivors.

The speech was delivered at the Reagan National Defense Forum at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute in California, an event that brings together top national security experts from around the country. Hegseth used the visit to argue that Trump is Reagan's "true and rightful heir" when it comes to muscular foreign policy.

Escaped inmates: Authorities hunted Saturday for the last of three inmates who escaped from a Louisiana jail after removing concrete blocks from a deteriorating wall.

"We would prefer that he surrender himself peaceably," St. Landry Parish Sheriff Bobby J. Guidroz said in a statement, "but we will not rest

Back to Nation & World

Secondary to none

Wright's breakout season comes as he mourns his JUCO coach John Beam

Cornerback Nahshon Wright celebrates after the Bears defeated the Steelers 31-28 on Nov. 23 at Soldier Field. EILEEN T. Meslar/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

In the mass of bodies, Nahshon Wright saw a sliver of dark brown leather.

"I just saw him holding the ball out with two hands," Wright said.

Jalen Hurts pushed his way into the pile on the Philadelphia Eagles' infamous Tush Push play. The Eagles needed a first down and were just 11 yards from regaining the lead on Black Friday in a game that felt as if it were about to turn in their favor.

Then the unheralded Bears cornerback, who wasn't even supposed to be a starter this season, flew around the pile and ripped the ball from Hurts' hands. Wright somehow worked his way to the bottom of the pile to recover the fumble.

The Bears took over and drove downfield for a touchdown that extended a one-point lead to eight. The Bears went on to close out a surprising victory over the defending Super Bowl champions at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia.

"That was one of the turning points in the game right there," coach Ben Johnson later said. "They're in scoring range and a high-percentage play for them, and yet he was able to get the ball away from them."

The Tush Push play marked Wright's third fumble recovery and his eighth takeaway this season, counting his five interceptions. He has been a difference-maker for the Bears in 2025 — and far and away the biggest difference-maker nobody saw coming. He started the season as a backup and got a chance only because of injuries at cornerback.

Perhaps most telling about the Eagles game was not Wright's takeaway, but rather the fact he played the entire game — 100% of the defensive snaps — despite veteran cornerbacks Jaylon Johnson and Kyler Gordon returning from injuries.

Days earlier, when asked about the possibility that Wright's playing time might diminish when those guys returned, Ben Johnson was blunt in his assessment of Wright: "He's done a phenomenal job.

Back to Sports

Wherever impactful DBs coach Harris goes, takeaways follow

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Al Harris had a profound impact on the Bears long before being hired as defensive backs coach/passing game coordinator.

A two-time Pro Bowl cornerback for the Green Bay Packers, Harris is the assistant who was tasked with piecing things together while Jaylon Johnson and Kyler Gordon missed much of the season. He's the guy who vouched for Nahshon Wright before the Bears signed him in April — seven months before he was named NFC Defensive Player of the Month for November.

Defensive coordinator Dennis Allen put a wire cage — the kind you see in a physical education class — in the unit's meeting room to fill with footballs as the defense collected takeaways this season. With five games remaining, there isn't a lot of room left. The Bears have 26 takeaways and 17 interceptions — tops in the NFL in both categories — with Harris' defensive backs accounting for 13 of the picks and six fumble recoveries.

The story of Harris would have taken a much different direction if it weren't for Bobby DePaul and Indianapolis Colts general manager Chris Ballard, who in turn had their careers launched at Halas Hall because of their relationship with the player.

DePaul, now the college director for SumerSports evaluating NCAA football, was a young pro scout in Philadelphia when roster cuts were looming in August 1998. The Eagles were hurting for cornerbacks as Bobby Taylor was sidelined with a broken scapula. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who drafted Harris in the sixth round out of Texas A&M-Kingsville the previous year, were heavy at the position. DePaul figured a cornerback or two would be cut loose.

One young player got just a few snaps all of preseason. He rarely left the sideline.

"Very accurate," said that player, who happened to be Harris.

The Bucs were planning to waive Harris with the goal of re-signing him to their practice squad for the second straight year. A bump-and-run cornerback, he wasn't a great fit for coach Tony Dungy's scheme, but the team, and especially director of player personnel Jerry Angelo, liked Harris.

"Tampa had overdrafted so someone good was going to be cut," DePaul said. "Now, I am watching the tape and I got my eyes on them. I think Al may have played five snaps all of preseason. It was very few. It just so happened one of the plays was a go route. He was in press man. The guy tries to shake him. Al, who is over 6 feet and has the length, flips his hips and he turns and runs the guy out of bounds. Plays the ball. The whole thing. I said, 'Oh, my god, there is no way they are cutting this guy.'"

Director of pro personnel Mike McCartney, now a Downers Grove-based agent, was involved. DePaul said he floated the idea of offering a late-round pick to the Bucs for Harris. He described an almost Abbott-and-Costello routine in talking with Eagles GM Tom Modrak about a deal.

"I've never heard of this guy," Modrak said.

"Everybody is looking for corners right now," DePaul said.

Back to Sports

Cubs might be ready to spend; Sox could shop in bargain bins

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The start of MLB's winter meetings, the debate over Notre Dame–Miami for a College Football Playoff spot, the evolution of the World Cup into the Trump Cup and other things to ponder while counting down the minutes until the Bears hit the frozen tundra.

Baseball's winter meetings begin Monday in Orlando, Fla.,and the Cubs and White Sox are ready to make some noise ... relatively speaking.

The Cubs reportedly made some news Saturday in their pursuit of starting pitching, but a viral tweet about closing in on an agreement with Zac Gallen was quickly retracted, and the Hot Stove League returned to its regularly scheduled crawl, already in progress.

Interest in Gallen makes sense, however, and his friendship with Cubs catcher Carson Kelly could pay off.

The Cubs missed out on the San Diego Padres' Dylan Cease, the former prospect they traded to the White Sox, though at $210 million for seven years, it's seemingly well beyond the Cubs' budget, especially if they want to add another hitter, such as third baseman Alex Bregman.

Cease's megadeal, and Devin Williams' three-year, $51 million deal with the New York Mets, suggest teams aren't all that worried about the possibility of a work stoppage after 2026, and are overpaying for pitching.

The Sox are reportedly bringing in left-hander Anthony Kay from Japan on a two-year, $12 million deal, so that's more noise than usual on the South Side. Kay, 30, had a 1.74 ERA in 2025 for the Yokohama Bay Stars, with 130 strikeouts and 41 walks in 155 innings.

It's a decent risk that at the very least could turn into some prospects at the trade deadline if he performs up to snuff and the Sox are out of contention. But if this is indicative of the kind of moves general manager Chris Getz plans on making, it's probably going to be a slow winter as he waits for free-agent prices to come down.

Notre Dame should be in the College Football Playoff, regardless of the results of Saturday's conference championship games.

For reasons not fully explained, the Fighting Irish dropped to No. 10 in the last regular-season CFP rankings despite a convincing win at Stanford, while Alabama moved up to No. 9. This was seen by many as a prelude to dropping Notre Dame out of the 12-team field as an at-large bid if BYU upset Texas Tech in the Big 12 title game to get an automatic bid.

That didn't happen, but there's still the outside chance Miami jumps over Notre Dame, based on their head-to-head matchup — a 27-24 Hurricanes win in Week 2 in Miami Gardens, Fla. Some prominent analysts are seemingly lobbying for it.

"They kicked Notre Dame's ass in the game," ESPN's Nick Saban said Saturday on College GameDay. Actually, Miami had 339 total yards in the game to Notre Dame's 314 and won on a late field goal with 64 seconds left, so it wasn't much of an ass-kicking.

Back to Sports

Selection Sunday

Stacy Revere/Getty

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Players from No. 4 Texas Tech celebrate after defeating No. 11 BYU 34–7 in the Big 12 championship game Saturday in Arlington, Texas, for the school's first conference football title. The Red Raiders (12–1) are going to the College Football Playoff for the first time and with the victory likely locked up a first-round bye in the 12-team field. Meanwhile, No. 10 Notre Dame was off this week and awaits its fate, hoping to hold on to the last at-large bid.

SEC championship

No. 3 Georgia 28, No. 9 Alabama 7

Big Ten championship

No. 1 Ohio State vs. No. 2 Indiana, late

ACC championship

No. 17 Virginia vs. Duke, late

American championship (Friday)

No. 20 Tulane 34, No. 24 North Texas 21

CFP selection show: 2 p.m. Sunday, ESPN

Coverage, Page 3 and chicagotribune.com/sports

Will there be familiar faces on the move?

White Sox catcher Kyle Teel reacts after hitting an RBI single against the Twins on Aug. 22 at Rate Field. Chris Sweda/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

General manager Chris Getz sees the makings of a more competitive White Sox team in 2026.

"We were able to make a significant jump from 2024 (to 2025)," Getz said during the GM meetings last month in Las Vegas, "and obviously it wasn't too difficult, given where our win total was."

The Sox collected 41 victories — while suffering an MLB modern-day record 121 losses — in 2024. They made a 19-game improvement to 60 wins in 2025.

"If you look at some of the production we've gotten from some of these players that have just gotten to the big leagues: (shortstop) Colson Montgomery and (catchers) Kyle Teel and Edgar Quero and (third/first baseman Miguel) Vargas taking a step forward and (starter) Shane Smith, their continued development is vital for us to add wins," Getz said. "And (in) addition to that, finding some free agents or other players from other organizations to help is a way to boost that win total."

Opportunities might arise for additions Monday-Wednesday at the winter meetings. Here are three questions facing the Sox ahead of the gathering in Orlando, Fla.

1. Will any familiar faces be on the move? One conversation repeatedly has popped up in recent offseasons: Will the Sox hold on to Luis Robert Jr. or will the center fielder be traded?

The subject came up again after the Sox exercised Robert's $20 million club option in November.

"To be able to have a player like that in your organization — and on the other end of the spectrum, that's why he's attractive (to teams), because they feel like they can use that boost as well," Getz said during a Nov. 19 videoconference call.

"It's very truthful that we are not shopping him, because we're very comfortable having him in a White Sox uniform, knowing what he's capable of doing. Now if it makes sense for both parties to work

Back to Sports

Will Cubs acquire top-of-rotation arm?

Jed Hoyer walks near the field before the Cubs play the Brewers in Game 5 of the NLDS on Oct. 11 at American Family Field in Milwaukee. Armando L. Sanchez/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The Cubs still have a lot of work to do on their roster.

As the Cubs head to the winter meetings this week in Orlando, Fla., they have made only two moves: signing veteran reliever Phil Maton to a two-year deal and signing infielder Scott Kingery to a minor-league deal with an invitation to big-league spring training. The Cubs still need multiple relievers and ideally another significant starting pitcher while figuring out how they might replace Kyle Tucker.

There are multiple avenues the Cubs can take to improving a roster that fell one win shy of the National League Championship Series. They face three questions with the winter meetings approaching.

1. Will the Cubs give another reliever a multiyear contract? President of baseball operations Jed Hoyer has been on the record about preferring to avoid giving relievers multiyear contracts.

Bullpens are notoriously volatile, and while the Cubs struggled to put together a reliable group, especially their back-end arms, year to year, their 2025 pen became a strength. The Cubs built the group without committing multiple years to their high-leverage arms. That gives them flexibility for how they want to construct the 2026 version but also means they came into the offseason having only one or two puzzle pieces in place to envision what the bullpen could look like for manager Craig Counsell.

The Cubs gave Maton a two-year contract for the team's first move of the offseason during the last week of November. Will Hoyer and the front office be willing to give out another multiyear deal for a proven reliever? A willingness to do so would indicate the Cubs want fewer question marks in a bullpen that essentially returns only Daniel Palencia.

"It's not my favorite thing to do. I prefer shorter commitments in the bullpen, but I'll never say never," Hoyer said of multiyear contracts for relievers at the general manager meetings last month. "We offered some last year (and) we didn't

Back to Sports

Escape from their grasp

No. 3 Dawgs end No. 9 Tide's hold on rivalry to win the SEC

Georgia running back Chauncey Bowens (33) runs past Alabama linebacker Justin Hill during the Southeastern Conference championship on Saturday in Atlanta. Mike Stewart/ap

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

ATLANTA — Gunner Stockton and Georgia finally put an end to Alabama's mastery of the rivalry between Southeastern Conference powers.

Stockton threw three touchdown passes as the Bulldogs, ranked No. 3 in the College Football Playoff rankings, solidified their position for a first-round bye in the CFP and beat Alabama in the SEC championship game for the first time, pounding the Crimson Tide 28-7 on Saturday.

Stockton, who completed 20 of 26 passes for 156 yards and rushed for 39 yards, was named the game's MVP. It was the first victory over No. 9 Alabama for Georgia's fourth-year players, including Stockton.

"We approached it the same, like it was a big game, and didn't make it bigger than it was," Stockton said.

Georgia (12-1) had been 0-4 against Alabama in the SEC title game and 1-7 against the Crimson Tide under coach Kirby Smart. Playing in their fifth straight league championship game, the Bulldogs earned their fourth title under Smart and 16th overall.

During a team meeting at the start of the week, Georgia players who had a win over Alabama were asked to stand up.

"None of them stood up," Smart said.

Now the Bulldogs can stand. They also can brag about winning back-to-back SEC titles.

"I thought it hit right between the eyes of doing it for the seniors," Smart said.

The lopsided loss forces Alabama (10-3) to worry about its standing with the College Football Playoff selection committee. The Crimson Tide were believed to be in good position when they moved up one spot in last week's CFP ranking, but the loss to the Bulldogs provides renewed cause for concern that the Crimson Tide could miss the playoff for the second consecutive season under coach Kalen DeBoer.

Back to Sports

Buckley leads Broncos to MAC crown

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Jalen Buckley had touchdown runs of 67 and 64 yards and Western Michigan won the MAC Championship, defeating Miami of Ohio 23-13 on Saturday.

Buckley's 67-yard touchdown burst on the third play of the game gave the Broncos the early lead. Palmer Domschke added three field goals in the first half, the last from 50 yards, and the Broncos led 16-6 at halftime. Buckley's 64-yard TD run made it 23-6 early in the third quarter.

In the regular-season matchup between the two, Miami scored 17 points in the fourth quarter, rallying to a 26-17 victory. This time, Western Michigan did not falter.

A couple of possessions after Miami closed to within 23-13 with 6 1/2 minutes left in the fourth quarter, Western Michigan drove to the 1-yard line before turning the ball over on downs. Facing a 10-point deficit and 99 yards to go in less than two minutes, the RedHawks only reached their own 16-yard line.

Buckley finished with 193 yards on 19 carries for the Broncos (9-4). His career high was 196 as a freshman against Toledo in 2023.

Broc Lowry had 111 yards passing and 65 yards rushing for the Broncos, who had 286 yards on the ground, 397 total.

Kam Perry had 101 receiving yards for Miami (7-6) and the RedHawks managed 272 yards of total offense.

Both teams will play in a bowl, Miami for the ninth time in the past 10 seasons.

Among its five bowl alliances, the Mid-American Conference does not have a specific tie-in for its conference champion.

UCLA hires Chesney: UCLA hired Bob Chesney from James Madison as football coach on Saturday, hoping he can turn around a program that has struggled for years, including in its first two seasons in the Big Ten.

Chesney takes over from interim coach Tim Skipper, who guided the Bruins (3-9, 3-6) after athletic director Martin Jarmond fired DeShaun Foster on Sept. 14. Foster went 5-10 after taking over the program from Chip Kelly in February 2024. Skipper was hired as coach at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo on Wednesday.

Chesney becomes the 20th head coach in UCLA football history and the first sitting coach to be hired since Pepper Rodgers in 1971.

James Madison hires fired Florida coach Napier: James Madison has hired former Florida coach Billy Napier to replace Bob Chesney, who is leaving for UCLA but would coach the Dukes in the College Football Playoff if they make the 12-team field.

Napier, who was 22-23 in four seasons at Florida, was fired Oct. 19. Chesney, who coached JMU to a 12-1 record and Sun Belt Conference championship, was officially announced as UCLA's new coach on Saturday.

Back to Sports

Raiders leave no doubt vs. Cougars

Texas Tech earns Big 12 title and likely first-round CFP bye

Texas Tech's Romello Height (9) celebrates with teammates after recovering a BYU fumble in the Big 12 Conference championship Saturday in Arlington, Texas. Julio Cortez/ap

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

ARLINGTON, Texas — Once again, Jacob Rodriguez and Texas Tech were asked questions about all the money invested in their team this season.

The Red Raiders, ranked No. 4 in the College Football Playoff rankings, so far have gotten quite a return on those millions of dollars spent in the transfer portal. They have their first Big 12 Conference title and are going to the College Football Playoff for the first time, almost certainly with a first-round bye.

"If we are gonna buy a team, why not be the best," Rodriguez said after Tech's 34-7 win over 11th-ranked BYU in the Big 12 championship game Saturday.

"Man, I can't wait to see where the CFP is going to put us," fourth-year Tech coach Joey McGuire said. "We're looking forward to the bye. You know, we're hoping and expecting that's where we'll be."

Rodriguez had 13 tackles and Ben Roberts overcame an early injury scare with two interceptions in the second half when Tech (12-1) forced four turnovers while holding BYU to a season-low 200 total yards. The two linebackers have both played more than 40 games for a defense transformed by additions in the transfer portal.

Behren Morton, who made his 35th start but didn't play in Tech's only loss this year at Arizona State, threw two TDs to Coy Eakin and Stone Harrington kicked four field goals.

Texas Tech, one of only six schools that have been part of all 30 Big 12 seasons, likely prevented the league from getting a second team in the playoff.

"You can't make a lot of mistakes like we did. We've learned it again. That's the second time this year," BYU coach Kalani Sitake said. "I've said it before, I think they're the best team in the country and I'm confirming it. They're the best team in the country. It just so happens that we had to play the best team in the country twice."

Back to Sports

Secondary to none

Wright's breakout season comes as he mourns his JUCO coach John Beam

Bears cornerback Nahshon Wright celebrates after his interception in the second quarter of a game against the Saints on Oct. 19 at Soldier Field. Chris Sweda/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

In the mass of bodies, Nahshon Wright saw a sliver of dark brown leather.

"I just saw him holding the ball out with two hands," Wright said.

Jalen Hurts pushed his way into the pile on the Philadelphia Eagles' infamous Tush Push play. The Eagles needed a first down and were just 11 yards from regaining the lead on Black Friday in a game that felt as if it were about to turn in their favor.

Then the unheralded Bears cornerback, who wasn't even supposed to be a starter this season, flew around the pile and ripped the ball from Hurts' hands. Wright somehow worked his way to the bottom of the pile to recover the fumble.

The Bears took over and drove downfield for a touchdown that extended a one-point lead to eight. The Bears went on to close out a surprising victory over the defending Super Bowl champions at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia.

"That was one of the turning points in the game right there," coach Ben Johnson later said. "They're in scoring range and a high-percentage play for them, and yet he was able to get the ball away from them."

The Tush Push play marked Wright's third fumble recovery and his eighth takeaway this season, counting his five interceptions. He has been a difference-maker for the Bears in 2025 — and far and away the biggest difference-maker nobody saw coming. He started the season as a backup and got a chance only because of injuries at cornerback.

Perhaps most telling about the Eagles game was not Wright's takeaway, but rather the fact he played the entire game — 100% of the defensive snaps — despite veteran cornerbacks Jaylon Johnson and Kyler Gordon returning from injuries.

Days earlier, when asked about the possibility that Wright's playing time might diminish when those guys returned, Ben Johnson was blunt in his assessment of Wright: "He's done a phenomenal job.

Back to Sports

Wherever impactful DBs coach Harris goes, takeaways follow

Bears pass game coordinator/defensive backs coach Al Harris celebrates with players late in the game against the Eagles on Nov. 28 at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia. Brian Cassella/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Al Harris had a profound impact on the Bears long before being hired as defensive backs coach/passing game coordinator.

A two-time Pro Bowl cornerback for the Green Bay Packers, Harris is the assistant who was tasked with piecing things together while Jaylon Johnson and Kyler Gordon missed much of the season. He's the guy who vouched for Nahshon Wright before the Bears signed him in April — seven months before he was named NFC Defensive Player of the Month for November.

Defensive coordinator Dennis Allen put a wire cage — the kind you see in a physical education class — in the unit's meeting room to fill with footballs as the defense collected takeaways this season. With five games remaining, there isn't a lot of room left. The Bears have 26 takeaways and 17 interceptions — tops in the NFL in both categories — with Harris' defensive backs accounting for 13 of the picks and six fumble recoveries.

The story of Harris would have taken a much different direction if it weren't for Bobby DePaul and Indianapolis Colts general manager Chris Ballard, who in turn had their careers launched at Halas Hall because of their relationship with the player.

DePaul, now the college director for SumerSports evaluating NCAA football, was a young pro scout in Philadelphia when roster cuts were looming in August 1998. The Eagles were hurting for cornerbacks as Bobby Taylor was sidelined with a broken scapula. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who drafted Harris in the sixth round out of Texas A&M-Kingsville the previous year, were heavy at the position. DePaul figured a cornerback or two would be cut loose.

One young player got just a few snaps all of preseason. He rarely left the sideline.

"Very accurate," said that player, who happened to be Harris.

The Bucs were planning to waive Harris with the goal of re-signing him to their practice squad for the

Back to Sports

Brad Biggs (8-4) • Sean Hammond (9-3) • Phil Thompson (7-5) •

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Brad Biggs (8-4)

Ben Johnson's running game has emerged as a wagon, and it will be fascinating to see how it performs in this matchup. The Bears rank No. 2 in the league, averaging 153.8 yards per game. The Packers run defense is tied for seventh, allowing only 98.3 per game. The Packers are the only opponent on the schedule — to date — that ranks inside the top 10 in run defense. Eight of the 12 teams the Bears have played currently rank 20th or worse. In part, that's because the Bears have run on them. It took a few weeks for the Packers offense to recover from the loss of tight end Tucker Kraft to a season-ending knee injury. This feels like it will be a close game, and last season's two meetings were decided by a total of three points. But from 2019 through 2023, a span of 10 meetings, the Packers didn't lose once, and the closest margin was seven points. Packers 27, Bears 24

Sean Hammond (9-3)

This is such a tough game to pick. The Bears running game has been electric, while the Packers run defense has been among the best in the NFL. Jordan Love has thrown just three interceptions, while the Bears defense leads the NFL in picks. The Bears keep winning, and it would be silly to doubt them now. Still, it has been nearly two decades since this franchise won back-to-back games at Lambeau Field. I like the Packers at home. Packers 24, Bears 21

Phil Thompson (7-5)

It's hard to see a path to victory for the Bears, though most thought the same of their Week 13 matchup against the Eagles. The Packers give up the sixth-fewest points per game and allow the eighth-fewest rushing yards per game (98.3), which is the Bears' bread and butter. Packers QB Jordan Love has a Jekyll-and-Hyde quality to him — just look at the last six starts — so a Bears upset is not unthinkable, just unlikely. Packers 27, Bears 23

White makes his return in Bulls' 6th straight loss

Bulls guard Coby White drives to the rim against Pacers guard Andrew Nembhard in the third quarter Friday at the United Center. John J. Kim/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The panic button is on the desk.

It might not be time to press it, but that day is coming soon. The first week of December is still early enough into the NBA season to allow hope or optimism or any other vein of positivity to stay alive for at least a few more days.

But the Chicago Bulls need to stare at that bright red button long and hard — for the rest of the week, for the rest of the month, until they figure out how to get back above .500.

Things are bad. They're not getting better. That became clear in the third quarter of Friday's 120-105 loss to the Indiana Pacers as half-hearted boos began to filter down from the 300 level of the United Center.

Matas Buzelis had just committed the 11th Bulls turnover of the game, chucking an entry pass well above the outstretched hand of Nikola Vučević. The error served as the second half of a demoralizing one-two punch after Josh Giddey stumbled out of bounds on the prior play, giving the Pacers the opportunity to push ahead 75-59.

Within minutes, the Bulls cut the deficit to three points. It didn't matter. They lacked the offensive firepower and the defensive fortitude to overcome an early Pacers lead built off errors and turnovers.

How does a team orchestrate a complete collapse against a four-win team?

Start by making seven 3-pointers in the first quarter, then let that shot disintegrate for the remaining three quarters. Accept the pace set by the defense rather than establishing an independent metronome.

Hyperventilate when guards Andrew Nembhard and T.J. McConnell hike up their shorts and get their hands active at the half-court line. Sling passes without purpose. Turn the ball over 18 times.

Allow the opponent to gouge three-lane thoroughfares through the paint. Don't rotate, then rotate too hard. Melt in the face of every Pascal

Back to Sports

Redbirds score 2 late TDs to upset No. 1 team

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

FARGO, N.D. — Tommy Rittenhouse connected with Daniel Sobkowicz for two touchdown passes inside the final two minutes and overcame five interceptions to help No. 17 Illinois State upset top-ranked and previously unbeaten North Dakota State 29-28 on Saturday in the second round of the FCS playoffs.

Rittenhouse's second 8-yard TD pass to Sobkowicz pulled Illinois State (10-4) within 28-21 with 2:44 left. On the ensuing possession, Jake Anderson strip-sacked Cole Payton, and the Redbirds had the ball back at the 23.

On fourth-and-goal with 51 seconds left, Rittenhouse threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to Sobkowicz, and the Redbirds converted a two-point conversion on a pass to Scotty Presson Jr.

The Bison (12-1) then drove near midfield, but Nathan Hayes threw an incomplete pass on fourth-and-7 to seal it for the Redbirds, who will move on to face the UC Davis-Rhode Island winner in a quarterfinal.

Payton threw a 73-yard touchdown pass to Bryce Lance on North Dakota State's first play from scrimmage. About 10 minutes later, Jackson Williams scored on a 52-yard punt return for a 14-0 lead. Nathaniel Staehling added a 73-yard pick-six midway through the second quarter to give the Bison a 21-7 lead.

Rittenhouse threw three interceptions in the first half before throwing an 8-yard touchdown pass to Sobkowicz late in the second quarter to get the Redbirds within 21-14 at the break.

Rittenhouse completed 35 of 52 passes for 249 yards. Victor Dawson scored on a 69-yard touchdown run in the second quarter and finished with 137 yards rushing for Illinois State.

Payton and Hayes combined for 6-of-19 passing for 120 yards. Barika Kpeenu's 4-yard touchdown run gave the Bison the lead at 28-14 with 12:38 left in the fourth quarter.

The Bison entered having won 14 straight in the series with a pair of playoff wins, including a 29-27 victory in the 2014 national championship game.

Back to Sports

NU falls to 0-2 in Big Ten despite 32 from Martinelli

Ohio State's Christoph Tilly dunks during the first half against Northwestern at Welsh-Ryan Arena on Saturday in Evanston. Geoff Stellfox/Getty

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Brandon Noel scored 29 points on 13-for-15 shooting and Ohio State won its Big Ten opener with an 86-82 victory over Northwestern on Saturday in Evanston.

Ohio State (7-1, 1-0) used a 18-7 surge in the second half to take a 64-61 lead with 8:41 left before Northwestern's Arrinten Page tied it with a 3-pointer. Noel then scored the next four points on two free throws and a layup. The Buckeyes later pushed the advantage to 81-73 with 2:10 remaining.

The Wildcats pulled within 82-81 with 21 seconds to play before the Buckeyes sealed it from the free-throw line.

Bruce Thornton added 17 points and 10 assists for Ohio State, which shot 57% (35 of 61) from the floor. Amare Bynum chipped in with 11 points and Devin Royal scored 10.

Nick Martinelli had 32 points and eight rebounds to lead Northwestern (5-4, 0-2). Angelo Ciaravino added 14 points and Page had 13.

Martinelli scored 18 points and grabbed six rebounds in the first half to help the Wildcats build a 44-40 lead. Noel scored 10 points to pace the Buckeyes.

Up next

Northwestern plays at home against Jackson State on Saturday.

Ohio State hosts No. 14 Illinois State on Tuesday.

Back to Sports

Cubs might be ready to spend; Sox could shop in bargain bins

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The start of MLB's winter meetings, the debate over Notre Dame–Miami for a College Football Playoff spot, the evolution of the World Cup into the Trump Cup and other things to ponder while counting down the minutes until the Bears hit the frozen tundra.

Baseball's winter meetings begin Monday in Orlando, Fla.,and the Cubs and White Sox are ready to make some noise ... relatively speaking.

The Cubs reportedly made some news Saturday in their pursuit of starting pitching, but a viral tweet about closing in on an agreement with Zac Gallen was quickly retracted, and the Hot Stove League returned to its regularly scheduled crawl, already in progress.

Interest in Gallen makes sense, however, and his friendship with Cubs catcher Carson Kelly could pay off.

The Cubs missed out on the San Diego Padres' Dylan Cease, the former prospect they traded to the White Sox, though at $210 million for seven years, it's seemingly well beyond the Cubs' budget, especially if they want to add another hitter, such as third baseman Alex Bregman.

Cease's megadeal, and Devin Williams' three-year, $51 million deal with the New York Mets, suggest teams aren't all that worried about the possibility of a work stoppage after 2026, and are overpaying for pitching.

The Sox are reportedly bringing in left-hander Anthony Kay from Japan on a two-year, $12 million deal, so that's more noise than usual on the South Side. Kay, 30, had a 1.74 ERA in 2025 for the Yokohama Bay Stars, with 130 strikeouts and 41 walks in 155 innings.

It's a decent risk that at the very least could turn into some prospects at the trade deadline if he performs up to snuff and the Sox are out of contention. But if this is indicative of the kind of moves general manager Chris Getz plans on making, it's probably going to be a slow winter as he waits for free-agent prices to come down.

Notre Dame should be in the College Football Playoff, regardless of the results of Saturday's conference championship games.

For reasons not fully explained, the Fighting Irish dropped to No. 10 in the last regular-season CFP rankings despite a convincing win at Stanford, while Alabama moved up to No. 9. This was seen by many as a prelude to dropping Notre Dame out of the 12-team field as an at-large bid if BYU upset Texas Tech in the Big 12 title game to get an automatic bid.

That didn't happen, but there's still the outside chance Miami jumps over Notre Dame, based on their head-to-head matchup — a 27-24 Hurricanes win in Week 2 in Miami Gardens, Fla. Some prominent analysts are seemingly lobbying for it.

"They kicked Notre Dame's ass in the game," ESPN's Nick Saban said Saturday on College GameDay. Actually, Miami had 339 total yards in the game to Notre Dame's 314 and won on a late field goal with 64 seconds left, so it wasn't much of an ass-kicking.

Back to Sports

Norris is the driver to beat

McLaren driver Lando Norris, center, speaks to mechanics prior to the third practice ahead of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Saturday in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Altaf Qadri/ap

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The Formula 1 title fight is Lando Norris' to lose, and he doesn't look like losing.

The British driver went fastest in both of Friday's practice sessions as he laid down a marker ahead of the three-way title decider at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

Norris beat title rival Max Verstappen by just .008 of a second in the first session and stretched that gap over the Red Bull driver to .363 in the second, which was more representative of the day-night conditions for Sunday's race. The only way Norris can lose the title is if he finishes the race outside the top three. Norris leads Verstappen by 12 points and teammate Oscar Piastri by 16.

Norris and Piastri are each looking to win their first title and Verstappen is aiming for his fifth in a row.

"Of course, I have the most to lose because I am the one at the top," Norris said Thursday. "I'll do my best to stay there till the end of the year, a few more days. At the same time, if it doesn't go my way, then I'll try again next year. It'll hurt probably for a little while, but that's life."

Piastri skipped the first session and was only 11th in the second, .680 off Norris' time, and the Australian is yet to show much competitive pace.

Norris has denied he'll ask Piastri to help out to at least ensure one McLaren driver becomes champion if it seems Verstappen will take the title.

McLaren CEO Zak Brown has opened the door to team orders, but if Norris has the sort of pace he showed Friday, they won't be necessary.

Verstappen's chances were revived when McLaren botched a strategy call in Qatar, one race after Norris and Piastri were disqualified in Las Vegas.

The one contender who's been in a final-race decider before, Verstappen said he's "just enjoying being here" in a season when his title defense often seemed impossible.

"I have four of those at home, so it's nice to add a

Back to Sports

Adams sets bold goal for US soccer team

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Tyler Adams has set a bold goal for the U.S. soccer team, aiming to reach the World Cup semifinals for the first time since the inaugural tournament in 1930.

“Everyone’s going to want us to say winning it is obviously the goal,” the American midfielder said Friday after the World Cup draw, “but I think setting the benchmark of the furthest the U.S. team has gone is also realistic.”

The 14th-ranked U.S. will start Group D against No. 39 Paraguay on June 12 in Inglewood, California, and then play 26th-ranked Australia six days later at Seattle. The Americans conclude the group stage on June 25 back at SoFi Stadium against the winner of playoffs among Turkey (25), Slovakia (45), Romania (47) and Kosovo (80).

Lionel Messi and Inter Miami have won their first MLS Cup, defeating the Vancouver Whitecaps 3-1 on Saturday. Messi, who joined the team 2 1/2 years ago, set up the winning goal with a 72nd-minute assist. This victory marks Inter Miami as the 16th franchise to win an MLS title in the league’s 30-year history. The win also adds to Messi’s impressive record, making it his 47th trophy for club and country.

College basketball: Milan Momcilovic scored 20 points and Iowa State sank 11 3-pointers to propel No. 10 Iowa State to a dominant 81-58 win over No. 1 Purdue on Saturday. ... Cameron Boozer scored 18 points, 16 in the second half, and Caleb Foster added 12 points to help No. 4 Duke hold on for a 66-60 victory over No. 7 Michigan State on Saturday.

NFL: Chargers rookie running back Omarion Hampton is expected to play in the Week 14 game against the Eagles. Hampton hasn’t played since Week 5. ... Former NFL star wide receiver Antonio Brown filed a motion on Monday to dismiss the second-degree attempted murder charge against him in Miami based on Florida’s “Stand Your Ground” law.

Back to Sports

Summer Olympians begin torch relay

Big 12 Commissioner Brett Yormark stands on the sideline during the playing of the national anthem before the first half of a Big 12 Conference championship NCAA college football game between BYU and Texas Tech Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025, in Arlington, Texas. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Summer Olympians begin torch relay

Olympic swimming champion Gregorio Paltrinieri, pictured, and fellow Summer athletes started off the torch relay for the Milan Cortina Winter Games on Saturday — which marked exactly two months before the Feb. 6 opening ceremony. Paltrinieri carried the sleek torch around the track of the statue-lined Stadio dei Marmi at the Foro Italico to begin a trek covering nearly 7,500 miles that will wind its way through all 110 Italian provinces before reaching Milan's San Siro Stadium for the opening ceremony. "It's a pleasure to be part of the Olympic movement movement, even if it's Winter Olympics," Paltrinieri said. In all, there will be 10,001 torch bearers. Giancarlo Peris, the final torch bearer from the 1960 Olympics in Rome, carried out the Olympic flame in a lantern to get the proceedings going. The 84-year-old Peris was 18 when he lit the cauldron at the Stadio Olimpico more than 65 years ago. "I didn't think I would be here today," Peris said with a chuckle. Paltrinieri won gold in the 1,500 meters at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games and has five Olympic medals in all.

'They deserve action and not excuses'

Big 12 Commissioner Brett Yormark, pictured, says legislation currently stalled in Congress is needed to regulate college athletics and put a stop to what he essentially calls uncapped spending for name, image and likeness in football. "Let me be clear about this," Yormark said Saturday before the Big 12 championship game between No. 5 Texas Tech and 11th-ranked BYU at the home of the Dallas Cowboys. "The House of Representatives must do what is right for over 500,000 student-athletes and pass the SCORE Act. We must protect their future, their well-being and their fair treatment. They deserve action and not excuses." An effort backed by the NCAA, the U.S. Olympic organization and the White House faltered in Congress this past week, with opponents raising concerns over the wide-reaching power it gives the governing body of college sports and its most powerful programs. The NCAA and Division I conferences portray the legislation as codifying the rules created by the

Back to Sports

Get on the ball

Stafford has already moved past his 3-turnover game

Panthers defensive end Derrick Brown forces a fumble by Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford on Nov. 30 in Charlotte, N.C. Rusty Jones/ap

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

LOS ANGELES — Matthew Stafford's 192 career interceptions are the most among active quarterbacks. He has also fumbled 91 times in his 17-year NFL career. So his three crucial turnovers in the Rams' 31-28 loss at Carolina aren't going to send Stafford into a funk or a crisis of competence.

"I know that whether we win or we lose, I move on pretty darn quickly," Stafford said Wednesday. "I just know that I have another challenge in front of me."

The eighth-leading passer in NFL history has the experience and the maturity to know that a quarterback can't allow mistakes or bad luck to beat him twice — particularly not during a season in which he has played his way into strong contention for his first league MVP award.

"I've played in a lot of games now, so (moving on) just feels like it comes easy to me," Stafford said. "It doesn't mean that I don't care about each and every single one of them, and do everything I can to try and help us win each and every one of them. But I do know that unless it's the last game of the year, there's another one coming, and you better be ready for it."

Stafford knows that his two interceptions — doubling his season total — and a late fumble were the biggest reasons why the Rams lost to the Panthers and fell out of the No. 1 spot in the NFC standings. There's still nothing he'll do much differently when he leads the Rams (9-3) to Arizona on Sunday.

"I've got a bunch of plays I've got to learn," he said. "I've got to make sure everybody's in the right spots at the right places. I do move on pretty quick, so I feel good about that, and I think the guys in our locker room do as well."

Stafford has had a reputation as an aggressive gunslinger for most of his career. He threw at least 10 interceptions in each of his first nine full seasons with the Lions, and he even led the NFL with 17 interceptions during his first season with the Rams.

That season that ended with a Super Bowl victory — albeit one in which he also threw two

Back to Sports

Week 14

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Last week: Straight up: 10–6. Against spread: 7–9.

Overall: Straight up: 140–53–1. Against spread: 96–92–6.

Houston (6–5) at

CHICAGO (9–3) at GREEN BAY (8–3–1)

Line: Packers minus 6 1/2

Bears have won nine of 10, including an impressive victory at Philly last week. Caleb Williams has to play better for Chicago to be a real threat. If Jordan Love and Micah Parsons keep playing the way they did at Detroit, the Packers might be the team to beat in the NFC. GAME OF THE WEEK | PACKERS, 27–18

PHILADELPHIA (8–4) at LOS ANGELES CHARGERS (8–4)

Line: Eagles minus 2 1/2

A two-game losing streak has the reigning Super Bowl champs reeling. Justin Herbert had surgery on his left wrist on Monday and his status is unknown, though it would be a surprise if he doesn't play. BEST BET | EAGLES, 24–18

INDIANAPOLIS (8–4) at JACKSONVILLE (8–4)

Line: Colts minus 1 1/2

The Colts haven't won in Jacksonville since 2014. Daniel Jones, Jonathan Taylor and the rest of a high-scoring offense have been sluggish during a stretch where Indianapolis has lost three of four. UPSET SPECIAL | JAGUARS, 22–20

MIAMI (5–7) at NEW YORK JETS (3–9)

Line: Dolphins minus 2 1/2

The Dolphins have won three in a row and Tua Tagovailoa is 6–0 against the Jets. De'Von Achane could have a big day running against New York, which is tied for 25th against the run. DOLPHINS, 23–20

PITTSBURGH (6–6) at BALTIMORE (6–6)

Line: Ravens minus 5 1/2

The Steelers are 2–5 since a 4–1 start, Aaron Rodgers isn't getting much help and fans are calling for coach Mike Tomlin to be fired. Lamar Jackson still looks slowed by injury but the Ravens have won the last two meetings by a combined 31 points. RAVENS, 23–19

SEATTLE (9–3) at ATLANTA (4–8)

Line: Seahawks minus 7

Good reads This year's top 10 books tackle censorship, crime and compassion

Christopher Borrelli's top 10 books of 2025. Stacey Wescott/Chicago Tribune photos

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

There are 49 books in front of me, stacked like colorful bricks in a wall. These are the 49 books I didn't include in the Chicago Tribune's 10 Best Books of 2025. If you're curious about the recipe for this list, here's how I do it: I read all year long, and when I finish a book and loved it — a comic book, a mystery, a history, essay collection, novel — I set it aside. As months roll on, the stack climbs, teeters. It lives inside a closet. Occasionally, I hear a collapse when the stack gets too tall.

By July, the rumbling begins.

Then, sometime in November, when I can no longer read another thing and the deadline for this list approaches, I drag it all out of the closet and intuitively separate out the books I haven't been able to shake. When I have 10, I have a list. I wish it were more thoughtful. I do shift books in and out of the top 10 pile until I feel certain: My favorites. But basically, that's the process.

Then, afterwards, I feel terrible.

The first week of January I recall thinking, of course Adam Ross's "Playworld," a disturbing novel about a child actor and a much older woman, will make the top 10 in December. Nope.Was there a lovelier physical book this year than "Syme's Letter Writer," an ode to correspondence by the New Yorker's Rachel Syme? Not really, and yet, that didn't make the final 10, either. Alexis Okeowo's "Blessings and Disasters," a portrait of Alabama, deserved more readers. Same goes for "The Autobiography of H. Lan Thao Lam," Lana Lin's communing with the spirit of Gertrude Stein, via Naperville. And same for Kevin Nguyen's irreverent, prescient "My Documents," which pictures the U.S. government putting Vietnamese-Americans in camps. And Virginia Feito's delightfully cold "Victorian Psycho." And Jeff Chang's great Bruce Lee biography, "Water Mirror Echo."

All of those and about 40 others should be in this top 10, too.

Still ... what's here? I'm jealous of anyone reading these for the first time. In no order:

Back to Arts + Entertainment

For the Constant Reader

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

My favorite part of the holidays is giving someone a book. I'm that person who gives everyone on my list a wrapped book then I joke it's a box of socks. My least favorite part of the holidays, however, is realizing months later they still have not opened that book.

The secret to a happy pairing?

Being honest about who that person is, not who you want them to be. With this in mind, what follows are the best gift books of the season, paired to some very specific people.

For the Constant Reader

It's hard to beat a Folio Society edition of a favorite book. They are to literature what the Criterion Collection is to movies, only much older, offering contemporary classics and established landmarks in keepsake editions ripe for posterity. Their latest includes "The Binti Trilogy," the great sci-fi epic from Flossmoor-native Nnedi Okorafor, featuring illustrations by David Palumbo that cement the series in a long history of genre fiction. Even nicer: The elegant linocuts by British artist Becca Thorne that spot a new edition of Maggie O'Farrell's modern classic "Hamnet." For children: A vibrant reissue of "Pippi Longstocking," quirkily manic as its heroine.

For Chicagoans Not From Chicago

"Clout City: The Rise and Fall of the Chicago Political Machine," by Columbia College's Dominic A. Pacyga, is an accessible one-stop history that returns the familiar story of how Chicago works to its cultural, street-level roots, from the Great Fire to the "rusted-out remnant" of Mike Madigan. If that sounds too familiar, might I suggest a newer epic about doing the same thing and expecting a different result: Danish writer Solvej Balle's "On the Calculation of Volume," a cult smash with "Groundhog Day" vibes, the story of a woman trapped in Nov. 18 who meets others lost in the same time. (Volume III just came out and it's addicting.)

For the Museum Fiend Who Can't Make it to Everything

The catalog for Wrightwood 659's "The First Homosexuals: The Birth of a New Identity 1869-1939" is as ambitious and absorbing as the exhibition, a vast internationally-minded study of how fine art portrayed homosexuality for centuries; what packed the Lincoln Park gallery earlier this year is now tucked alongside deeper dives into Russia, Japan, Brazil. "Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind" is the catalog you needed after the moving new exhibit at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, a way to slow down and read all of those instructions on many of Ono's works, prompts for creating your own art. One catalog for an exhibition that never made it to Chicago: "3-D Doings: The Imagist Object in Chicago Art 1964-1980," organized by Skidmore College, is great fun, a roundup of the objects, the pop irons, stools, mannequins, tiny diners and more, constructed by the fabled Hairy Who art collective and Barbara Rossi, Ed Paschke, etc.

For the Restlessly Creative

Elizabeth McCracken's "A Long Game: Notes on Writing Fiction" boils 35 years of teaching creative writing into 280 practical points, from the siren's song of punctuation to the danger in striving for perfection. It'd make a nice companion to "Nature Notes of an Edwardian Lady," an elegant illustrated diary from 1905 by the English artist Edith Holden, pairing her watercolors with daily thoughts about the moors, the grass, the birds...

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Holiday gifts from Chicago museums celebrate city culture

Bronze lion paperweight ($75) at the Art Institute of Chicago gift shop. E. Jason Wambsgans/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

For Chicagoans who dread the frenzy of holiday shopping, there's a calmer alternative. Instead of heading to mall, you can head to a museum.

The city's cultural institutions offer festive shopping options that you may find inspiring, and you likely won't find in big-box aisles. Museum gift shops brim with festive cards, clever stocking stuffers and unique items that carry real stories.

Plus, it's a chance to support the organizations that make Chicago a cultural hub.

Admission is not required to visit these museum shops, but you may also enjoy browsing the galleries for things that aren't for sale.

Art Institute of Chicago

The AIC's two museum shops are filled with art-inspired gifts that incorporate masterpieces into everyday life.

For kids, show a little love for sweet home Chicago with a Chicago flag plush ($28) or the colorful "Chicago ABCs" board book ($14.99). The plush green lions ($25), modeled after the museum's Michigan Avenue guardians, can even be adorned with removable holiday wreaths.

For fashion and accessories, the Tiffany Hartwell Memorial Window silk scarf ($45) and Tiffany stained-glass earrings ($40) transform Art Institute icons into wearable works.

Desk décor lovers can protect their workspace with a bronze lion paperweight ($75).

Art fans can keep their feet cozy with playful socks featuring masterpieces such as Edward Hopper "Nighthawks" ($16), or hold their eyeglasses safe with the Claude Monet "Water Lilies" eyeglass case and cloth ($24).

Gift shops are located at the Michigan Avenue entrance and the Modern Wing entrance.

111 S. Michigan Ave.; shop.artic.edu

Back to Arts + Entertainment

Best of 2025

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

If it's December, it must be the season to look back and sum up the year. Beginning with this Sunday's edition of A+E, our critics and columnists remember the highs and lows of 2025, including our picks for the 10 best books of the year. As well as the best books to give as gifts.

Next Sunday: The best of Chicago theater and dance and all kinds of music.

In the weeks ahead, we select our Chicagoans of the Year in the arts and remember those we lost in 2025.

Holiday gifts from Chicago museums celebrate city culture

Tiffany stained-glass earrings ($40) at the Art Institute of Chicago Museum. E. Jason Wambsgans/Chicago Tribune

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Art fans can keep their feet cozy with playful socks featuring masterpieces such as Edward Hopper "Nighthawks" ($16), or hold their eyeglasses safe with the Claude Monet "Water Lilies" eyeglass case and cloth ($24).

Gift shops are located at the Michigan Avenue entrance and the Modern Wing entrance.

111 S. Michigan Ave.; shop.artic.edu

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Holiday gifts from Chicago museums celebrate city culture

Octopus chandelier ornaments ($40) at the Shedd Aquarium. The ornaments are a tribute to the Tiffany pendants that hang in the rotunda at the Shedd. Chris Sweda/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

For Chicagoans who dread the frenzy of holiday shopping, there's a calmer alternative. Instead of heading to mall, you can head to a museum.

The city's cultural institutions offer festive shopping options that you may find inspiring, and you likely won't find in big-box aisles. Museum gift shops brim with festive cards, clever stocking stuffers and unique items that carry real stories.

Plus, it's a chance to support the organizations that make Chicago a cultural hub.

Admission is not required to visit these museum shops, but you may also enjoy browsing the galleries for things that aren't for sale.

Art Institute of Chicago

The AIC's two museum shops are filled with art-inspired gifts that incorporate masterpieces into everyday life.

For kids, show a little love for sweet home Chicago with a Chicago flag plush ($28) or the colorful "Chicago ABCs" board book ($14.99). The plush green lions ($25), modeled after the museum's Michigan Avenue guardians, can even be adorned with removable holiday wreaths.

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For the Constant Reader

"Lee Friedlander: Christmas," by Lee Friedlander, "Norman Rockwell's Christmas," by Norman Rockwell, "The Uptown: Chicago's Endangered Movie Palace," by Robert Loerzel and James A. Pierce and "Chicago's Holiday Train," by Daniel Moreno.

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

My favorite part of the holidays is giving someone a book. I'm that person who gives everyone on my list a wrapped book then I joke it's a box of socks. My least favorite part of the holidays, however, is realizing months later they still have not opened that book.

The secret to a happy pairing?

Being honest about who that person is, not who you want them to be. With this in mind, what follows are the best gift books of the season, paired to some very specific people.

For the Constant Reader

It's hard to beat a Folio Society edition of a favorite book. They are to literature what the Criterion Collection is to movies, only much older, offering contemporary classics and established landmarks in keepsake editions ripe for posterity. Their latest includes "The Binti Trilogy," the great sci-fi epic from Flossmoor-native Nnedi Okorafor, featuring illustrations by David Palumbo that cement the series in a long history of genre fiction. Even nicer: The elegant linocuts by British artist Becca Thorne that spot a new edition of Maggie O'Farrell's modern classic "Hamnet." For children: A vibrant reissue of "Pippi Longstocking," quirkily manic as its heroine.

For Chicagoans Not From Chicago

"Clout City: The Rise and Fall of the Chicago Political Machine," by Columbia College's Dominic A. Pacyga, is an accessible one-stop history that returns the familiar story of how Chicago works to its cultural, street-level roots, from the Great Fire to the "rusted-out remnant" of Mike Madigan. If that sounds too familiar, might I suggest a newer epic about doing the same thing and expecting a different result: Danish writer Solvej Balle's "On the Calculation of Volume," a cult smash with "Groundhog Day" vibes, the story of a woman trapped in Nov. 18 who meets others lost in the same time. (Volume III just came out and it's addicting.)

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Photographer Sandro Miller's new book celebrates 50 years of faces

Chicago-based photographer Sandro Miller has been traveling the globe for more than 50 years, cameras and curiosity in tow. Diana Kartasheva

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Moose was worried.

Bill "Moose" Skowron was one of the greatest baseball players of his time. A Chicago native and 16-inch softball legend, he played for years on the New York Yankees (28 home runs in 1961) and was best pals with Mickey Mantle. He came to the White Sox for a while to play and had been retired and working in community relations for that team when I met him in 2000.

That year, he and I were on our way to photographer Sandro Miller's studio on the Near West Side. Moose was uneasy because, almost inconceivably, he had never sat for a formal portrait before preparing to do so for a story I was writing.

"What kind of person takes the picture?" Moose asked. "Am I dressed OK?"

He told me that his wife, Virginia, had urged him to wear a conservative outfit of white shirt, dark tie, sport coat and slacks. The meeting and the photo session started awkwardly, but eventually Miller won Moose over, and the ballplayer allowed the photographer's assistants to apply makeup, get him to change into a black turtleneck sweater and to pose in various ways (including biting down on a baseball) that made for many striking images.

"Good guy, Sandro," said Moose on the way back to his suburban home. "Hope he's good at taking pictures."

This memory came rushing back when I opened a remarkable new book, "On Earth as It Is Not in Heaven" (Skira Press), 276 pages filled with 229 photos and some words from a small gathering of the voices of photography experts David Campany, Phillip Prodger, Anne Morin and Alan Cohen, former Chicago journalist and prize winning poet Patricia Smith and some guy named John Malkovich.

Sandro Miller's photos explode across the pages, like some visual fireworks display, holding the eyes and intriguing the mind and, often, grabbing the heart.

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For the Constant Reader

Folio Society books with slipcases “Hamnet,” by Maggie O’Farrell, left, and “The Binti Trilogy,” by Nnedi Okorafor. Stacey Wescott/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

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Takeaways from a talk with Percival Everett

The novelist Percival Everett in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue in Chicago before an event at Exile in Bookville in 2024. Terrence Antonio James/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

At the recent convention for the National Council of Teachers of English, I had the pleasure of seeing Percival Everett in conversation with incoming NCTE president and Stanford University professor Antero Garcia.

I have long considered Everett — author most recently of the award-winning Huck Finn retelling "James" — a "genius," saying as much in this very newspaper in June 2017, having believed this to be true for several years before that public declaration.

I have always been curious about "genius," working in a field in which such things are identifiable, while being confident I am not one. I thought maybe hearing a conversation with someone whose work I considered genius would give me some insights into the subject.

It is clear from the conversation that Percival Everett would put little stock in the idea of "genius." He was funny and laconic, perhaps a little grumpy — remarking how tired he was of reading publicly from "James" — but also warm and human. I learned he never goes online. He drafts his novels longhand with pencil in an "embarrassing" notebook, the kind of thing associated with a grade-school girl.

Never going online and handwriting manuscripts are off the table for me in terms of how I make my way in the writing profession, so if these are the keys to genius, I'm out of luck.

Listening closely over the 40 minutes or so, I tried to piece together something concrete I could take away, a real-world practice of genius. I think I may have noticed something anyone could put to use, regardless of our pursuits.

The first intriguing nugget came when Garcia asked about the origins of "James," and Everett admitted there was no good story, that the idea came to him in a moment after hitting an errant tennis shot. He wondered if anyone had ever written "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" from the point of view of Jim.

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Book recommendations from the Biblioracle

The novelist Percival Everett in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue in Chicago before an event at Exile in Bookville in 2024. Terrence Antonio James/Chicago Tribune

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Book recommendations from the Biblioracle

John Warner tells you what to read based on the last five books you've read.

1. "Summer of Our Discontent" by Thomas Chatterton Williams

2. "The Wide Wide Sea" by Hampton Sides

3. "Between the World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates

4. "Charley's Web" by Joy Fielding

5. "The Women" by Kristin Hannah

— William S., St. Charles

For William, I'm recommending the first in what is going to be a trilogy from Colson Whitehead, "Harlem Shuffle."

1. "Atonement" by Ian McEwan

2. "More Than Words: How to Think About Writing in the Age of AI" by John Warner

3. "Empire Falls" by Richard Russo

4. "Olive, Again" by Elizabeth Strout

5. "The Stranger" by Albert Camus

— Neil T., Chicago

Jennifer Haigh is one of the most reliably satisfying novelists working today. "Heat and Light" is the specific pick.

1. "Isola" by Allegra Goodman

2. "The Correspondent" by Virginia Evans

3. "The Fire Next Time" by James Baldwin

4. "Cursed Daughters" by Oyinkan Braithwaite

5. "Audition" by Katie Kitamura

— Ileana P., Chicago

House wins new hearts in romance publishing

831 Stories catching eye of readers with fresh approach to genre

Claire Mazur, left, and Erica Cerulo, seen Oct. 21, founded 831 Stories and have built a big-tent community while cultivating a certain mystique. Natalie Keyssar/The New York Times photos

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Eliza Dumais was parked near the bar at the New York City restaurant Bridges. She gestured at an ice bucket on the counter that displayed four bottles of wine.

Each one was from a vineyard where Dumais has harvested grapes. Behind her stood a grazing table piled with whole oranges, chilies and artichokes garlanded around plates of cured meats and cheese, and a butter tower.

The meticulously curated event was to celebrate the recent release of Dumais' debut romance novel, "Grape Juice," set in the vineyards of Alsace, France, and drawing, in part, on her journalistic expertise and her relationship with restaurateur Sam Lawrence.

Yet there was no reading. The book in question was subtly placed near the restaurant's entrance and by the sofas. And were you to catch a glimpse of the cover, you'd never know it was a romance novel at all.

Building a big-tent community of fans while cultivating this mystique is part of what has turned 831 Stories, an independent house founded in fall 2024 by Claire Mazur and Erica Cerulo, into a buzzy new player in the publishing world.

Even as the romance genre continues to outpace the rest of the book industry, 831 Stories, with only seven books in the marketplace, has managed to catch the attention of investors as well as readers.

The company does not share sales figures. But 831 Stories has received more than $4 million in funding: a previously undisclosed $1.5 million from investors including sisters Sara and Erin Foster, hosts of "The World's First Podcast" and creators of the Netflix series "Nobody Wants This." And in August, the company received another $3 million led by Female Founders Fund, a venture capital firm.

Romance, Mazur said, is the "only form of mainstream media that centers women's pleasure, joy and desire."

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Good reads This year's top 10 books tackle censorship, crime and compassion

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

There are 49 books in front of me, stacked like colorful bricks in a wall. These are the 49 books I didn't include in the Chicago Tribune's 10 Best Books of 2025. If you're curious about the recipe for this list, here's how I do it: I read all year long, and when I finish a book and loved it — a comic book, a mystery, a history, essay collection, novel — I set it aside. As months roll on, the stack climbs, teeters. It lives inside a closet. Occasionally, I hear a collapse when the stack gets too tall.

By July, the rumbling begins.

Then, sometime in November, when I can no longer read another thing and the deadline for this list approaches, I drag it all out of the closet and intuitively separate out the books I haven't been able to shake. When I have 10, I have a list. I wish it were more thoughtful. I do shift books in and out of the top 10 pile until I feel certain: My favorites. But basically, that's the process.

Then, afterwards, I feel terrible.

The first week of January I recall thinking, of course Adam Ross's "Playworld," a disturbing novel about a child actor and a much older woman, will make the top 10 in December. Nope.Was there a lovelier physical book this year than "Syme's Letter Writer," an ode to correspondence by the New Yorker's Rachel Syme? Not really, and yet, that didn't make the final 10, either. Alexis Okeowo's "Blessings and Disasters," a portrait of Alabama, deserved more readers. Same goes for "The Autobiography of H. Lan Thao Lam," Lana Lin's communing with the spirit of Gertrude Stein, via Naperville. And same for Kevin Nguyen's irreverent, prescient "My Documents," which pictures the U.S. government putting Vietnamese-Americans in camps. And Virginia Feito's delightfully cold "Victorian Psycho." And Jeff Chang's great Bruce Lee biography, "Water Mirror Echo."

All of those and about 40 others should be in this top 10, too.

Still ... what's here? I'm jealous of anyone reading these for the first time. In no order:

"Clam Down: A Metamorphosis" by Anelise Chen. Technically a memoir, though so hilarious and original, it's impossible to read as genre at all but rather, a novelistic tale of a writer weathering a divorce who opens a typo-ridden email from her mother, imploring her to "clam down." Surrounded by social media, buried in research, Chen decides to embrace the metaphor: Should she retreat into a hard shell? Or open up and trudge on?

"Red Scare: Blacklists, McCarthyism and the Making of Modern America" by Clay Risen. I can't quite put my finger on why, but the year was agog in echoing histories of hypocritical censorship and political bullying that eventually left the nation is a different place. A powerfully patient narrative account that goes beyond the familiar images of Congressional hearings and Joe McCarthy to the everyday fear-mongering that created a network of repression — and the everyday courage that, one day, toppled the hysteria.

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While movie theaters struggle, Chicago's historic Music Box is adding a third screen

A promotion for the movie "Oppenheimer" in 70 mm format is displayed on the marquee at the Music Box Theatre in Chicago. John J. Kim/chicago tribune 2023

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Times have been tough for movie exhibitors thanks to the one-two punch of streaming and a pandemic, but Chicago's Music Box Theatre is going strong regardless. The historic art house cinema on Tuesday announced the addition of a new 100-seat third screen at its Southport Avenue location, as well as the purchase of another historic venue in the Midwest with the Heights Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Locally, the new theater space is being carved out of two adjacent storefronts, paid for by the Music Box's owners as well as a community development grant from the City of Chicago. The additional venue will create more flexibility for festivals, extended runs and filmmaker events. The space is expected to open in summer 2026 and it comes on the heels of some improvements made to the existing theaters last year, with the installation of new, more comfortable seating.

In Minneapolis, the Heights Theater is a "renowned 1926 atmospheric movie palace featuring original plasterwork, crystal chandeliers, and its signature Mighty Wurlitzer organ," according to a statement. Its programming history has much in common with that of the Music Box — with first-run showings alongside older films, as well as the ability to screen 70mm prints — so both the historic nature of the venue and its focus will be familiar territory for the new owners. The theater will close briefly after its annual New Year's Day screening of "Holiday Inn" and reopen Jan. 9 with "Father Mother Sister Brother," the new comedy from director Jim Jarmusch starring Cate Blanchett.

Per the announcement, the Music Box intends to maintain annual traditions including its "White Christmas" screenings, its Celebration of Cinema festival, a film noir series and an Alfred Hitchcock series, while adding some new programming: Late-night screenings on the weekend and Saturday morning cinema geared towards kids.

"The Heights has always been about celebrating great films with great people," said Tom Letness, outgoing owner. "I'm thrilled to pass it on to Music

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Actors discover emotional power of 'Hamnet'

Zhao's film portrait of marriage in grief, literary greatness

Jessie Buckley, left, and Paul Mescal, seen Sept. 7 in Toronto, star in director Chloé Zhao's film "Hamnet." Chris Pizzello/ap

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

During the emotionally wrecking final scene of "Hamnet," Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal had an issue.

"There were moments where the camera was obstructing us," Buckley recalls. "We were like: 'No, we have to see each other.' "

"And then the minute we did see each other, it was like 'Oh, no,' " Mescal says, laughing. "What a glorious thing."

In "Hamnet," Chloé Zhao's adaptation of Maggie O'Farrell's prizewinning 2020 novel, Mescal plays William Shakespeare and Buckley his wife, Agnes. It's a speculative drama with basis in historical fact. One of the couple's three children, Hamnet, died in 1596 at age 11. Within a handful of years, "Hamlet" would premiere at the Globe Theatre. The names, scholars have noted, were essentially interchangeable in 16th-century England.

Zhao's film, in theaters now, imagines the possible connection between the death of the Shakespeares' son and the birth of the playwright's greatest work. It's a portrait of a marriage, in grief and literary greatness. In many ways, it's also a movie about seeing and being seen. Both William and Agnes are drawn together as misunderstood near-outcasts. William is dismissed as "a pasty-faced scholar." Agnes is branded a "forest witch." Gaps of misperception and solitude are bridged by love in the film's first half, and art in its overwhelming final act.

In both cases, the actors' eyes tell much of the story. Their performances — raw, earthy, soulful — have been hailed as among the best of the year. Both are widely expected to land Oscar nominations. Though they acted in separate timelines in Maggie Gyllenhaal's "The Lost Daughter" (2021), "Hamnet" is the first time on screen together for the two young, acclaimed Irish stars.

"We entered the film at the perfect juncture. I had huge respect for Jessie and loved spending time with her," Mescal says. "But we were also at the point where we didn't know each other all that well.

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Donnelly makes her theater kid dreams come true

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

When she was just a child, Meg Donnelly gave off a serious theater kid vibe. At 5 years old, her favorite musical role wasn't the sunny "Annie." It was Mimi from "Rent," the struggling erotic dancer who is also a heroin addict.

Donnelly grew up to become a film and television star through her breakout role in Disney's music-filled "Zombies" franchise and the ABC sitcom "American Housewife." She has also appeared on "The Masked Singer" and has a new EP, "dying art."

The New Jersey-raised actor recently returned to her first love — theater. Donnelly has made her Broadway debut in "Moulin Rouge! The Musical," playing cabaret star Satine in the jukebox hit until March.

The show about the goings-on in a turn-of-the-century Parisian nightclub has been updated with tunes like "Single Ladies" and "Firework," alongside the big hit "Lady Marmalade."

This interview with Donnelly has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: What was your Broadway debut like?

A: It was really surreal. I feel like I've been working towards this since I was a little girl. When I was younger, Broadway was the only option. I was a full theater kid — that's all I wanted to do. And, you know, life just took me in different directions. But this is something that I feel I was born to do and just being onstage (opening) night, it kind of all just makes sense.

Q: What's your favorite musical?

A: My favorite musical of all time is "Rent." I saw it a lot when I was younger — maybe when I was too young — and my dream role has always been Mimi, which is really funny. So when I was like 5 or 6 auditioning for theater, they would be like, "What's your dream role?" And everyone would be, like, "Annie" or "Matilda" and I'd be like, "Mimi!" They'd be like, "Oh my God, this kid!" So, it is very full circle because "Moulin Rouge" is based on the same opera as "Rent." Satine is kind of Mimi.

Q: So much of your career makes this a natural step. You played a young woman who sang in a school production of "Little Shop of Horrors" on "American Housewife" and everything about the "Zombie" franchise screams musical theater. How do you describe your path here?

A: There's not a right or wrong path. You know, there's so many things in my career where I'm like, "Oh, I wish I'd done that" or "Maybe I should have gone that way." I'm a very chronic over-thinker. But it really doesn't matter. I will say, being a part of Disney definitely changed my life.

Q: Another Broadway- adjacent step was when you were in the cast of NBC's live telecast of "The Sound of Music" in 2013. You were the understudy for Louisa von Trapp?

A: Yes, I understudied Louisa and Ella Watts- Gorman, who played Louisa, was so talented and amazing. I was praying that nothing happened to her. We weren't really taught much. We knew the music, but that was

AI hit sparks questions of attribution, ethics

Digitally generated song built on sound of musician Brown

Blanco Brown has recorded a version of the AI-created song. Evan Agostini/Invision 2024

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

When an AI-generated country song called "Walk My Walk" hit No. 1 on Billboard's country digital song sales chart recently, it was credited to a fictional artist named Breaking Rust — a white, digitally generated avatar that didn't exist two months ago.

But the song's vocal phrasing, melodic shape and stylistic DNA came from someone who does exist: Grammy- nominated country artist Blanco Brown, a Black music artist who has worked with Britney Spears, Childish Gambino and Rihanna.

And he had no idea.

"I didn't even know about the song until people hit me up about it," said Brown, whose 2019 country rap hit "The Git Up" helped usher in a new, hybrid era of country crossover. He didn't learn about the chart-topping AI track until his phone was flooded with messages from friends.

"My phone just kept blowing up," he said. "Somebody said: Man, somebody done typed your name in the AI and made a white version of you. They just used the Blanco, not the Brown."

The moment is the latest example of how generative AI is upending the music industry, giving anyone the ability to instantly create seemingly new songs by typing prompts into a chat window, often using models trained on real artists' voices and styles without their knowledge.

The credits for the grit-filled, chant-heavy track "Walk My Walk" list Aubierre Rivaldo Taylor as one of the song's creators, with streaming platforms such as Apple Music and Spotify identifying him as the songwriter and producer. In recent months, Taylor has also been credited as the songwriter and producer behind Defbeatsai — one of several X-rated, AI-generated country artists that exploded across social media last year.

The Defbeatsai ecosystem, however, connects back to another figure in Brown's past: Abraham Abushmais, a collaborator Brown once jokingly called "Abe Einstein" for his sharp studio instincts.

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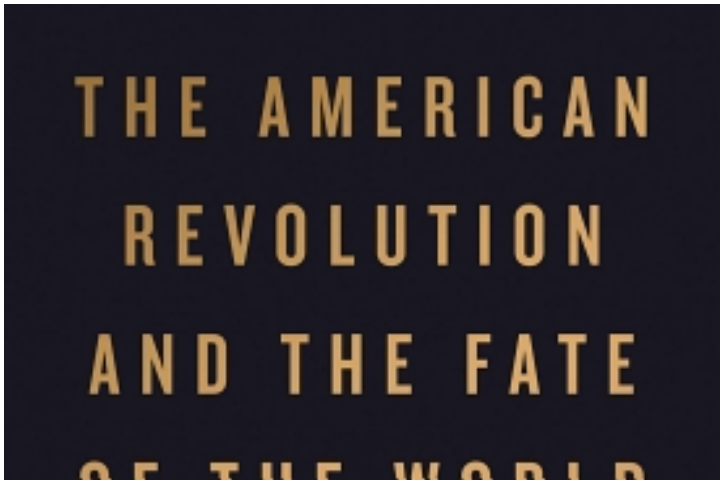
Case made for US war's global nature



By Richard Bell; Riverhead Books, 416 pages, $35.

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Next July marks 250 years since a handful of upstart American colonies declared independence from Britain. A war was fought, as we all know, and almost immediately after it was over, Richard Bell asserts in "The American Revolution and the Fate of the World," a "collective amnesia" took hold.

The preference for historians and Americans alike was to tell a simple story, one in which "plucky homegrown heroes faced down all the king's horses and all the king's men, all on their own." The truth is, Bell says, the country's founding required "a world war in all but name."

The transnational nature of the conflict can't be understated, he goes on. Its reach was felt far and wide, so much so that it is "not an exaggeration to say that the American Revolution set much of the world as we know it in motion," to the delight of some and the horror of others, namely Indigenous and enslaved peoples.

To get at that immensity, Bell advances seven core arguments that encompass migration, the war's human cost, the improbability of its outcome, naval power, trade, imperial crackdowns in other colonies and the spread of liberty. He then filters it all through individual experience — Molly Brant, for instance, a Mohawk woman who worked as a broker, spy and refugee- camp coordinator. It's a crackerjack way to illustrate the heart of the conflict and its scope.

The book's tone can be uneven, however. Bell's occasional colloquialisms prove welcome, but his awkward direct addresses, not so much. Moreover, Bell sometimes strains to make revolutionary connections.

Despite that, Bell — who is British by birth but an American by choice — is an apt guide for readers revisiting "the shot heard round the world" and its ramifications. His "The American Revolution and the Fate of the World" is a solid addition to any semiquincentennial reading list. — Maren Longbella, Minnesota Star Tribune

Jonathan C. Slaght's "Tigers Between Empires" is a deep look at the Wildlife Conservation Society's

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Fiery student-teacher fling resurfaces

By Claire-Louise Bennett; Riverhead Books, 224 pages, $29.

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Irish author Claire- Louise Bennett's new novel, "Big Kiss, Bye-Bye," sees its unnamed narrator wrestle with reawakened memories of an intensely passionate schoolgirl relationship with a teacher.

These emotions from 30 years earlier meld with the woman's feelings about other relationships, primarily an adult romance with a different older man. It's an entrancing and exacting examination of the persistence of memory and those "half-buried distorted things (that) have a habit of rearing their noxious malformed heads again."

When the novel opens, in October 2021, the woman hasn't seen former lover Xavier for three months, since she rebuffed his request for a kiss at their first post-pandemic meeting. She cherishes their friendship, but is decades younger than the septuagenarian and no longer attracted to him. He wants love or nothing, so says goodbye and then days later emails about her latest book. Reminiscing about their time together, her genuine affection makes her tend to explain away his often passive-aggressive behavior.

Around the same time, the woman's former high school English teacher writes to her, triggering memories of a day in his classroom when she was distracted because "one of his colleagues (had been) fooling around with me." That colleague was her philosophy teacher, Robert Turner, with whom she had a fiery fling that seemingly ended badly.

Bennett's prose is full of utterly original imagery, and the novel's shifting perspective keeps the narrator's — or the author's — conclusions nebulous.

The narrator's intense introspection can become mind-numbingly repetitive at times, but it is all part of the woman's almost dispassionate assessment of the profound effects her past relationships have had on her. Her prescription would likely be endorsed by other authors revisiting the past: "Keep writing. Keep making books. Keep dropping them on people." — Cory Oldweiler, Minnesota Star Tribune

If you're a fan of Jane Austen or the PBS series "Miss

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Blanc greatest mystery of 'Knives Out' movies

Craig, Johnson have colored in character over course of trilogy

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The greatest mystery in Rian Johnson's "Knives Out" movies might be Benoit Blanc.

Over the course of three films, Johnson and Daniel Craig have stingily dropped clues to Blanc's past and personal life. Since Blanc first introduced himself in "Knives Out" as "a respectful, quiet, passive observer ... of the truth," following the breadcrumbs has been a sport of its own.

There are, for instance, the vague, offhand references to cases he has cracked before: something with a tennis champion, another with a ballet dancer and, in the latest chapter, "Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery," we hear about something dastardly at the Kentucky Derby that he solved.

Blanc has been profiled in The New Yorker and a guest on "The View." He appears to live with Hugh Grant. He dislikes the board game Clue. Having been caught singing Sondheim and, in the new one, humming "Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat," from "Cats," we know he loves musical theater.

Over the course of the "Knives Out" trilogy, Johnson and Craig have colored in Blanc with sporadic and comic revelations, adding subtle, and sometimes personal, characteristics.

"I'm not as much into musical theater as Rian," Craig says, sitting beside his director in a recent interview.

"So he claims in front of a microphone," adds Johnson.

Every "Knives Out" movie is wholesale change. New setting. New case. New cast of characters. But Craig and Johnson are the mainstays. Together, they've turned Blanc, the last of the gentleman sleuths, into one of the greatest protagonists in recent movies.

In "Wake Up Dead Man," now in theaters before streaming on Netflix, Blanc takes up the case of a monsignor (Josh Brolin) who dies mysteriously in the middle of a church service. Of the movie's many delights — among them, Josh O'Connor's co-leading performance as a priest under suspicion and a cast of parishioners including Andrew Scott, Jeremy Renner and Glenn Close — is seeing Craig continue to find new little wrinkles to Blanc.

Rather than being set in stone, Blanc has evolved. Take that accent. The first script, Johnson recalls, described "the slightest hint of a Southern lilt." But Craig, taking inspiration from Tennessee Williams and Shelby Foote, pushed the accent closer to, as Chris Evans' character says in "Knives Out": a "Kentucky-fried Foghorn Leghorn drawl." In "Glass Onion," he laid it on even thicker, part of a scheme revealed later in the film.

"My biggest fear was that it would devolve," Craig says, chuckling. "If it ever becomes pastiche, it's like, 'Whoa, let's get out of here.' God knows I'm not comparing myself to Gene Wilder, but the way Gene Wilder did comedy was: It's all through truth. As long as you're as truthful as you can get in that situation, the funny comes out."

Back to Arts + Entertainment

Festive feelings flow from new holiday albums

Paisley, Pentatonix, Benét among artists with releases for ’25

Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The best way to get festive is to sing along to Christmas classics new and old. But don’t know what to press play on? We’ve got you covered.

In honor of the most wonderful time of the year, here are some of the best new holiday releases for the 2025 season. So grab a loved one, a cup of eggnog and get to listening.

‘Greatest Hits Christmas,’ LeAnn Rimes: Just ahead of her Christmas tour, country icon LeAnn Rimes released “Greatest Hits Christmas.” It’s exactly what it sounds like: a mesh of classics and some of her best-known songs from her past holiday albums. There are also new collaborations, like Aloe Blacc on “That Spirit of Christmas” and Gavin DeGraw on “Celebrate Me Home.”

‘Christmastime,’ Trisha Yearwood: Country singer Trisha Yearwood’s voice sounds like coming home — making her the ideal talent for a new holiday collection. “Christmastime” is stacked with familiar tunes and perhaps, best of all, features “Merry Christmas, Valentine,” a duet with her husband, Garth Brooks. Blast that one at your get-together, and there won’t be a dry eye in the house.

‘Holidays,’ Roberta Flack: The world lost a giant in February when Roberta Flack, the Grammy-winning singer and pianist, died at age 88. Perhaps best known for her timeless take on “Killing Me Softly With His Song,” the Christmas season brings up another reason to celebrate her. A new release, “Holidays,” like many on this list, features originals and covers — and a selection of songs from Flack’s classic “The Christmas Album.”

“Feels Like Christmas,’ Mickey Guyton: Country powerhouse Mickey Guyton feels like Christmas, and once you dive into these eight tracks, you’ll feel it, too. From her rendition of “O Holy Night” to her masterful take on “Do You Want to Build a Snowman?” from Disney’s “Frozen,” there’s a lot to love here.

‘Snow Globe Town,’ Brad Paisley: Some things just make sense together: peanut butter and jelly, coffee and doughnuts, Brad Paisley and his touring band

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In defense of slowing

In gratitude Saving ‘gay sheep’ A creative sojourn to the Burren’s vast landscape on Ireland’s rugged west coast travel Neo-Luddites have come to ‘free the iPad babies’ from technology’s hold Think about those who shaped us — from family to recess supervisors, writes Heidi Stevens How fashion connected a designer, a farmer, Grindr and a herd of male-oriented rams

Karen Cox/The New York Times

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Rick Steves: Oslo, where Norway’s nature, history and culture mix it up

Travel Troubleshooter: Turo claims damage on car that was muddy when rented

Friends reunited

A story of distance, loss and rediscovery

The Kid Whisperer

Teachers can be simultaneously uncool, effective

Back to Life + Travel

Family keeping distance years after recovery from addiction

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Dear Eric: I've just turned 40 this past year. The last 15 years, I was in a horrible drug addiction. I lied and hurt and did terrible things to a lot of people, especially my family.

About eight years ago they officially disowned me. Understandable.

I've cleaned up and got my act together six years ago. At first, I tried to force my way back into their lives, which all refuted. I lashed out, said horrible things and stopped trying to be in their lives. My mom will stop by on my birthday for 10 minutes or so and drop a card off at Christmas. As for my two older brothers and my father, it's radio silence.

I guess what I'm asking is, what do I do to fix this and fast, as I said I've turned 40 this year (and) my parents are both 70. Time is running out, and I couldn't imagine living my life without some kind of acceptance from my father. Or knowing he did or does love me.

My heart breaks at the thought, but this is a real pickle. How can I fix a problem when the ones I need to fix it with won't talk to me? Do I just keep ignoring their existence and put on this façade that I don't care to my wife and 4-year-old son? What picture am I painting to my son, as he's been guilty by association you could say as he has never spent time with his grandparents or uncles or even my nieces and nephews?

— Discombobulated

Dear Discombobulated: There's a saying in some recovery communities — perhaps you've heard it — time takes time. This means that you accumulate sober days one at a time; there's no fast track to long-term recovery, unfortunately. Similarly, there is no fast track to healing years of hurt and distrust. This can be hard to accept. It may feel like you're trapped in your old self and your old actions. But you have to accumulate days in your new way of life one at a time, too.

If you're in a recovery program, like Narcotics Anonymous or SMART Recovery, keep working it. Talk to your sponsor or peer support group about your desire to make amends to your relatives and mend those relationships. Ask yourself if you've acknowledged and apologized for the things that you did during active addiction. If not, a letter doing so is a good place to start.

I know this causes you a lot of pain, and possibly shame. But you're not your past, and you're not the worst things you've done. Let your wife know what you're really feeling. Continuing to put up a façade will only hurt your relationship and could endanger your sobriety. Tell the truth. That's how things change, little by little.

Dear Eric: My husband and I have been married for 15 years. He has children from his first wife, as I have boys from my first marriage. Recently, we were at a birthday party at my stepson's home for one of our grandchildren. The kids, aged 5 through 9, were punching Uncle Rick in the stomach as hard as they could.

The gentleman sitting next to me said, "I do not like the hitting." I said I agree, "I think it is disrespectful." My daughter-in-law just about jumped over the table and said, "It is not disrespectful, they are playing."

Pause to remember those who shaped us

Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

I spent a weekend with two lifelong friends recently and we were discussing all the ways our days — lives, really — have a way of getting away from us.

"And you know how guilty we feel doing anything for ourselves," my friend said.

I don't, actually. I mean, I do. In theory. I know how our culture conspires to make us feel guilty. I know I have given into that guilt at different points. I know they have been my unhealthiest points. I know I'm trying not to return to those points.

I know my mom is my North Star on this. (On so many things. But especially on this.)

As a kid, I watched my mom make space and time for things she loved. Birding. Traveling. Long walks in the woods. Restoring natural areas to their native habitat. Always with friends. As an adult, I'm watching her continue to do these things.

If she felt guilty about any of it (and I hope she didn't), she hasn't shown it. Her joy looks purposeful and protected.

My dad, for his part, has never seemed anything but delighted by her joy. He generally gains happiness from other people's happiness and no one more so than my mom. Their marriage is one of the most beautiful pairings I've witnessed in this life. I have tears in my eyes just typing this sentence.

I'm aware that what I saw on the outside doesn't necessarily reveal the full range of conflict — internal or external — on the inside. But I'm also aware that what I saw gave me permission to prioritize friendship and adventure and purpose and joy. Not just permission, actually. A gentle, constant nudge toward them.

I'm also aware, especially in this season of gratitude, that this approach sits at the center of so much of what I cherish most in my life. And I have my mom to thank for that. Thank you, Mom, if you're reading this.

In my Balancing Act Facebook group, I asked readers to share examples of people they're grateful

Here to ‘free the iPad babies’

Neo-Luddite groups across the country encourage people to transform their relationship with technology

Bucky Baldwin, a member of the Luddite group Lamp Club, speaks during an event to protest smartphones Sept. 26 in New York City.

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

On a recent Saturday, a group of about 100 people in conical gnome hats made of brightly colored manila envelopes gathered near the start of the High Line in the Meatpacking District in New York City’s Manhattan and began to march south.

The occasion was the second annual “Scathing Hatred of Information Technology and the Passionate Hemorrhaging of Our Neo-liberal Experience” conference, organized by Lamp Club, an organization for people with Luddite tendencies, or at least aspirations.

The event was generally antitechnology, but why the gnomes?

“Because gnomes come from the earth,” Bucky Baldwin, one of the event’s organizers, shouted through a megaphone at the crowd, his mop of dark brown hair flopping as he emphasized each word.

Then the next question. Why lamps?

“Lamps just create that atmosphere,” said Jackie McVorran, who started Lamp Club in October 2023.

From the start, the group had a penchant for unorthodox gatherings. In keeping with the club’s name, McVorran, 19, did not want to meet in conference rooms or classrooms — places with overhead lighting. One of its first events was a “shoes optional” day at the New School campus where she and Baldwin, 21, met as students during an open mic night at the university cafe. They wanted to break down some of the modern anxiety around in- person interaction by putting people in a slightly unfamiliar context.

“Some people felt liberated by it, but other people were like, ‘That’s crazy. That’s nasty,’ ” recalled McVorran, a native New Yorker who studies psychology, philosophy and anthropology.

She was undeterred. She wanted to understand her classmates who had been so opposed to the event: “I think it all goes back to people feeling alienated from one another.”

The Lamp Club is part of a growing ecosystem of

Back to Life + Travel

Maintaining magic doesn't have to break parents' bank

Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Feeling the elf-haustion? Does coming up with new adventures for your nighttime Santa spy have you stressed out?

Holly (or Buddy or Snowflake) doesn't need elaborate setups or expensive props to keep the wonder alive.

Here's how to reclaim the joy of the Christmas season while saving your sanity.

Keep it simple, Santa: "The elf just has to move, no need to make it elaborate," Chanda Bell, co-CEO of The Elf on the Shelf, told the New York Post.

Use everyday items like dry-erase boards for messages or arrange shoes into a "choo-choo" train with small treats inside each one.

Your children will love the magic, regardless of complexity.

Budget friendly mischief: Skip the pressure of elaborate gifts or Instagram- worthy setups.

Liz Everett, a mom in the New York City borough of Manhattan, said she spends less than $10 and 20 minutes on daily elf scenes.

"This intentional time to connect with one another is worth it," she explained to the New York Post, proving simple creativity beats costly displays.

For free alternatives, transform household items into magical scenes — kitchen utensils become drum sets, and tissue boxes transform into tiny beds.

Time-saving tricks: Move your elf after bedtime rather than rushing in the morning.

And if you need quick solutions, the official 24-day Ultimate Elf Ideas Kit offers ready-made backdrops and props.

Remember the real magic: "The people that get it, get it," Bell said. Although social media might showcase extravagant elf adventures, the true enchantment lies in family moments.

Back to Life + Travel

Pals find ‘missing piece’ after reconnecting

Friends share their stories of distance, loss, rediscovery

Heather Robb, left, and Laine DePasquantonio, right, take a selfie in April in Denver when they reconnected. The pair say they were inseparable when they were in their 20s. Heather Robb

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

When Jennifer Lea Austin met Molly in second grade, they quickly became best friends. They giggled through classes until the teacher separated them, inspiring them to come up with their own language. They shared sleepovers and went on each other’s family vacations.

But they gradually drifted apart after Austin’s family moved to Germany before the girls started high school. Decades passed before they recently reconnected as grown women.

“Strong friendships really do stay for the long haul,” Austin, 51, said. “Even if there are pauses in between and they fade, that doesn’t mean they completely dissolve or they go forgotten. They’re always there kind of lingering like a little light in the back.”

Early friendships are some of the deepest: the schoolmates who shared bike rides and their favorite candy. The roommates who offered comfort after breakups. The ones who know us, sometimes better than we know ourselves.

But as adults take on jobs and the responsibilities of homes and families, it can be challenging to stay connected with everyone we’ve loved.

Technology plays a role, too. Loneliness has increased since the television was invented and intensified with the introduction of smartphones, according to psychologist Marisa Franco, a University of Maryland assistant clinical professor and author of “Platonic,” a book about the science of attachment.

Once they’ve lost touch with friends, some people are reluctant to reach out, fearing rejection. But most of those on the receiving end appreciate the effort more than we expect, Franco said.

“People are delighted to hear from their old friends and open to connections,” she said.

Franco suggests reminiscing about a shared memory to span the time and distance. It can be something as simple as, “This pic came up and I just realized I wanted to check in on you,” she said.

Back to Life + Travel

Friend without kids grapples with feeling like odd one out

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Dear Miss Manners: I am in my late 30s and childless, not by choice. I prefer to have a small circle of friends, but I have found it difficult to find other childless friends; statistically, most people my age have children — especially in church settings, where I spend a lot of my time.

It often leaves me feeling like I don't fit in, as I cannot relate to the conversations revolving around pregnancy and childrearing.

One close friend, who is aware of how I feel, and with whom I converse nearly every day, often shares stories with me that I cannot relate to. I often find it hard to cope with this, as they bring up a lot of grief and feelings of being the odd one out. She just shared her excitement over a conversation she had with two other friends (whom I do not know) about the similarities in how they raised their now-adult children and some of the relational results of their various parenting choices.

I don't want to squash my friend's excitement, nor do I want to discourage her from sharing the things that are important to her; however, I find her lack of tact related to subject choice to be unintentionally hurtful.

How do I politely tell her that I care about what is important to her, but that I feel hurt and unseen when she talks about how she relates to other mothers, or goes into detail about how she parented? I don't want to discount her very important work of being a mother, but I also don't want to suffer in silence.

Gentle reader: Certainly, it is inconsiderate to talk incessantly about something your conversational partner is sensitive toward or has not experienced. But it is also difficult to confine oneself only to subject matter that is shared. So while Miss Manners has sympathy, she also warns you not to fall into the habit of only seeking out likeminded companionship.

She also notices that the example you use of your friend's insensitivity is not as damning as you seem to think. Your friend was not speaking about current parenting experiences, but of the results of past parenting. Surely, as a child of parents yourself, you can relate. But if you still need to emphasize the difference, you could always preface it by saying, "Well, I can't speak to it from the parenting end, but as a child of the authoritative parenting method, I can tell you that ..."

In any case, it would be a shame if you cut yourself off from others' human experiences because you have been deprived of some of your own. Rather than suffer in silence, see if you can find deeper connections. You may be surprised by the rewards.

Dear Miss Manners: I was hospitalized for 17 days due to complications from a cancer-related surgery. During that time, my sister drove 80 miles a day to see me. She was very kind and patient.

Since then, I have recovered, and I now live in an assisted living facility. My sister has become overbearing: lecturing me on what I eat, how I keep my room, how I take care of my diabetes, on and on. I've told her that it makes me feel bad, but nothing has changed. Finally, I told her that my only problem was her picking on me.

Avoid pupil power struggles by being uncool yet effective

Kids in Non-Behavioral Leadership schools are often told what to do hundreds of times a day. Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Dear Kid Whisperer: I'm reading your book and having a hard time with how this works for seventh graders.

If I use Strategic Noticing as many times as you suggest, 34 times in one of my 50-minute periods, I think it will actually annoy the kids, and they'll turn it into a joke. Do you have any thoughts on seventh graders?

Dear Reader: No.

Not really.

Let me explain.

As teachers, we want kids to do lots of stuff. We may want them to sit down, be quiet, work, carry the "1," cross the "t," show their work, solve for "x," line up, keep their eyes on their own paper, on and on, ad infinitum.

So, traditionally, we educators will do what makes sense: We just tell kids what to do.

"Sit down."

"Be quiet."

"Carry the 1."

Kids in Non-Behavioral Leadership schools are often told what to do hundreds of times a day.

Not only is it annoying for them and for you, but it also systematically reinforces all of the behaviors you don't want to see.

Have you noticed that kids love attention and love having a feeling of control over you?

Did you ever notice that the 20% of your students who take 80% of your time don't care what kind of attention and control they get (positive or negative)?

So, when we tell students what to do when they are not yet doing what they are supposed to be doing, we reinforce them doing the things we don't want them to do!

Lean into routine to help anxious dog, restless cats

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Dear Cathy: My 3-year-old rescue beagle, Millie, howls every time I leave the house, even if it's just to take out the trash. My neighbors say she cries the entire time I'm gone from the house. I've tried leaving the TV or radio on, but nothing seems to help. How can I get her to feel calmer when I'm not home?

— Janet, Patchogue, New York

Dear Janet: It sounds like Millie has developed some separation anxiety, which is common in rescue dogs who have experienced change or loss. There are several things you can do to help her feel more secure when you leave.

Start by making departures and arrivals very calm; no big goodbyes or excited greetings. That helps teach Millie that your coming and going is no big deal. You can also try leaving her with a stuffed Kong or puzzle toy with hidden treats, so she associates your absence with something positive. Gradually build her confidence by practicing short separations. Step outside for a few seconds, then return before she starts to howl, and slowly increase the time away. This teaches her that you always come back.

Anxiety wraps can help some dogs feel more secure, as can over-the-counter calming chews or pheromone diffusers. If those don't help enough, ask your veterinarian about prescription anti-anxiety medication or short-term options to help her during training. With patience and consistency, Millie can learn that being alone isn't scary.

Dear Cathy: I recently adopted two cats I had fostered more than two years ago. One, a male, cries at night when I close my bedroom door, and the female paws at it. I prefer they not sleep in my room or on my bed, but their nightly protests are keeping me awake. Any advice for helping them settle down?

Also, I've read that cats can get dehydrated and should have multiple water stations. Do you recommend automatic fountains?

— Heidi M.

Dear Heidi: Congrats on being a new cat mom. Yes, cats often don't drink enough water, so multiple water stations are a great idea. Some love fountains, others don't, so you will have to see what your cats prefer. Keep their water in a separate spot from their food. Many cats won't drink when it's located next to their meals.

As for the nighttime antics, cats naturally follow a rhythm of play, eat, groom, sleep. Try giving them a good play session before bed, something that lets them chase and pounce, like a wand or laser toy. Then, feed them right afterward. They'll usually groom themselves and settle in for a nap.

Cats are naturally nocturnal, so it goes against their body clock to stay asleep all night. If you can afford it, I recommend buying a timed laser light and timed feeder that works with their microchip or tag. Set up the laser toy to go off at a certain time in the wee hours of the morning, which will engage their play routine again (while you remain fast asleep), and then time it so their feeder opens after that, prompting the same play, eat,

Creative mystique

Wandering rocks and valleys of the Burren in west Ireland sparks guests' imaginations

People walk July 15 along Mullaghmore, derived from the Irish for "Great Summit," a distinctive feature of the Burren along Ireland's west coast.

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The first time I walked alone in the Burren, a vast region on the west coast of Ireland, I got lost. Coming up a mountain path, I somehow wandered onto a desolate ledge, where I found myself in a standoff with a pack of wild Irish goats. The shaggy beasts didn't seem inclined to make room for me, so I reversed course, which led me into a valley where I came upon a 2,000-year-old stone fort (ancient forts and tombs abound in the Burren). I then climbed back up a different path, ascending to a breathtaking view of the Atlantic Ocean.

For hours, I was the only human around. And there was no sound other than my footsteps on flat limestone rock that glowed in the sunshine. Free of distraction, my mind raced with thoughts about a book idea forming in my head. I lost track of time and walked for six hours, leaving me simultaneously exhausted and exhilarated.

This is the essence of the Burren: It's a place to wander, both physically and mentally, to get lost in your thoughts and then be periodically snapped to attention by real-life wonders.

If you're not familiar with the Burren (the name derives from the Gaelic for "stony place"), you're not alone. Even among the Irish, many have only a passing familiarity with it — meaning, they tend to pass by it on their way somewhere else. Extending from just north of the Cliffs of Moher to Galway Bay in northwest County Clare, the Burren features scenic mountains, lovely beaches, grassland valleys and, around its perimeter, several small but lively towns. At its center is a 6-square-mile national park.

But what it's most known for is limestone. Long ago, this area was an enclosed tropical sea. As the water receded, a rugged limestone landscape composed largely of compressed seashells was slowly revealed. The stone, which is highly reflective, changes hue constantly, and can take the form of huge "erratic" boulders or flat, smooth slabs divided by crisscrossing crevices; walking on those slabs is like striding atop a limestone jigsaw puzzle.

Sprouting from the crevices between the rocks are

Norway's capital filled with texture

Rising like an iceberg from the sea, Oslo's Opera House is one of many ways the city has revitalized its waterfront. Rick Steves

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

A big statue of a tiger sits in front of the train station of Norway's capital, Oslo. A local once explained that Oslo is nicknamed "Tiger City" because, in the 19th century, when country boys would visit this wild and crazy "New York City of Norway," it would "make a mark on their soul."

I find Oslo more of a kitten than a tiger. Its mix of grand Neoclassical facades, boxy '60s-style modernism, pastoral parks and homogenous culture have always felt a bit tame for my taste. But dig deeper, and you'll find more texture here — from wild new buildings on its people-friendly harborfront to troubled artists.

The city's grand boulevard, Karl Johans gate, cuts from the train station through the center of town to the Royal Palace. It's lined with restaurants, parks, and landmarks — including Oslo Cathedral, Parliament and Stortorvet Square, with its lively flower and produce market.

A boulevard highlight is the venerable Grand Café, once the meeting place of Oslo's intellectual and creative elite. At the back of the café, a mural shows Norway's literary and artistic clientele enjoying this fine hangout, from playwright Henrik Ibsen (who came in every afternoon) to Edvard Munch, Norway's most famous and influential painter.

Munch's work is featured on Oslo's waterfront, in the new Munch museum — the biggest art museum in Europe dedicated to a single artist. Munch helped to pioneer a new style, Expressionism, using lurid colors and bold lines to "express" inner turmoil and the angst of the modern world. His most iconic painting is The Scream, which he described as "the work of a madman."

The Munch building is one example of Oslo's efforts to make its fjord more people-friendly. In the past, you would have dodged several lanes of traffic to get here — but now, most traffic has been diverted through tunnels. As in many European cities, residents are reclaiming their waterfront.

Next door to Munch is the marble Opera House, which seems to rise like an iceberg from the sea.

Back to Life + Travel

Winter draws on music of Bulgaria

Pieces on Paul Winter's album "Horn of Plenty" were inspired by his experiences in Brazil, Ireland and Russia. Bill Ellzey

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Six-time Grammy- winning saxophonist Paul Winter is back with his latest album, "Horn of Plenty."

"It is the literal meaning of cornucopia, the traditional Thanksgiving symbol of abundance," the musician said. "I have always referred to my soprano sax as a horn, and I've aspired to produce a voice on saxophone that is similar to that of a French horn."

Winter, 86, resides in northwest Connecticut.

This interview with Winter has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: Did any of your travels inspire "Horn of Plenty"?

A: Pieces on the album have been inspired by my experiences in Brazil, Ireland, Russia and Bulgaria, as well as the ocean and the Grand Canyon.

Of the 13 tracks on the album,"Harvest Faire" was inspired by my years of listening to Bulgarian music and my love of the unique rhythms of Balkan cultures. "Primavera (Spring)" traces its origins to my jazz sextet's 1962 tour of Latin America, when I met the song's composer, Carlos Lyra. Many years later, I was blessed to have the opportunity to record "Primavera" with the great Brazilian guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves.

And there are reinterpretations of several iconic chestnuts from my musical journey, including Ralph Towner's composition, "Icarus," which has been (my group) the Consort's theme song for over 50 years.

Q: Do you have any upcoming trips planned?

A: I'm looking forward to returning to Brazil, Japan and also California.

Q: What are your hopes for the upcoming year?

A: My perennial wish is that more and more people, especially of the younger generations, will return to the world of nature.

Turo claims renter damaged car covered in mud at pickup

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

I rented a car through Turo in Edmonton, Canada, and returned it in the same condition, but the host accused me of causing a scratch. The car was covered in mud when I picked it up, making it impossible to inspect for existing damage. At drop-off, it was dark and snowy, and my phone was dying, so my photos were too dim to prove anything.

The host admitted that the damage could've happened after I left the car in an unsecured parking spot. He refused to meet in person to discuss the alleged damage. He rented the car out again immediately, and Turo backed his $1,200 claim despite mechanics saying that the scratch was minor.

Turo ignored my evidence and raised the charge by $400 for "hidden damage" that was found after other renters used the car. As a student living on less than $2,000 a month, this fee is devastating. Did I just become a victim of a Turo scam?

— Bartosz Jusypenko, Olszanica, Poland

A: Turo, which is like Airbnb for cars, should have ensured that the host followed its own policy requiring vehicles to be clean at pickup. A dirty car prevented you from documenting pre-existing damage, violating the company's terms. (Turo's guidelines state that hosts must "clean the vehicle before each trip.")

Alberta's Consumer Protection Act also requires businesses to act in good faith, which Turo ignored by rubber-stamping blurry photos and refusing to address your evidence.

But you made a few mistakes, too. First, you shouldn't have accepted a muddy car. If you had no choice, you should have spoken with your Turo host about the difficulty of documenting any preexisting damage. (For me, knowing what I know about damage claims, I would have been highly reluctant to accept anything other than a written waiver from the host.)

You should have taken better photos at drop-off. But the host's refusal to allow an inspection — and Turo's failure to mandate one — tilted the process unfairly. Always keep a detailed paper trail, as you did, and escalate to executives if a company stonewalls you. I've published Turo's contacts on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org.

Before I get to the resolution of this case, I wanted to note that I agree with Turo and the host on one issue. If a renter damages a car while they have it — even if it's not their fault — they are responsible. In other words, if someone scratched your car, and you didn't notice, it doesn't matter. You're still on the hook.

But the evidence in this case was as muddy as the side of your Turo car. The photos were inconclusive. Turo didn't follow its procedures, and neither did the car's owner. The company needed to take another look at your case.

I contacted Turo on your behalf. The company admitted that the host's photos were "unclear" and voided the claim. "We remind all hosts and guests of the importance of clear trip photos," a representative told me.

Rescued gay sheep ‘wool survive’

Fashion connects designer, farmer, Grindr, herd of rams

Michael Stücke holds a sheep Nov. 4 in the infirmary on his farm in Löhne, Germany. Stücke, 52, is the co-founder of the nonprofit Rainbow Wool. Valentin Goppel for The New York Times

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Michael Schmidt, the Chrome Hearts collaborator and rock ’n’ roll couturier to divas like Cher, Shakira and Sabrina Carpenter, was shocked when he heard about the “gay sheep.”

Or, to be fair, he was not shocked that some rams are considered gay, or “male-oriented,” meaning that they decline to mate with ewes, a behavioral pattern seen in approximately 1 out of every 12 rams, and that scientists have studied for decades.

Rather, he was shocked to discover what happens to many such sheep that are part of large flocks on working farms — the kind of establishments where, said Scott Carmody, the head of domestic operations for Woolmark, the usual ratio is one ram per 50 ewes, and the job of the ram is procreation.

If the ram does not fulfill his duty, he is generally sent to the slaughterhouse. Essentially, “the sheep are killed for being gay,” Schmidt said.

Schmidt thought that perhaps fashion could change the situation. So though he generally spends his days working with chain mail and Swarovski crystals, he has joined forces with Rainbow Wool, a German nonprofit created by a farmer in deep Westphalia who rescues the nonmating sheep and cultivates them for their wool, and Grindr, the LGBTQ dating app that bills itself as the “gayborhood of the world,” to bring the story to life through a 37-piece knitwear collection.

Recently, the knits were showcased in the first Rainbow Wool fashion show titled “I Wool Survive” — though calling it a “show” is, Schmidt said, a misnomer.

“It’s an animal rights story,” he said. “And it’s a human rights story.”

According to Tristan Pineiro, the senior vice president for brand marketing and communications at Grindr, it is also “a metaphor for how gay people are treated across the world.

“The gay sheep get discarded, get forgotten, are seen as not valuable,” Pineiro said. “But through

Back to Life + Travel

Brighten your holiday with lights

Enbrighten Eternity Landscape Lights. Enbrighten

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

A recent post by Enbrighten told people to say goodbye to their boring outdoor holiday lighting, and honestly, that couldn't be more true.

Enbrighten Modern Cafe LED Lights bring your space to life with a stunning array of colors and lighting modes, perfect for every holiday and celebration. Built for year-round use, they feature weather-resistant, IP65-rated cables and durable acrylic bulbs. With a simple do-it-yourself setup, you'll enjoy an easy, permanent installation that looks great all year.

The setup is based on where you want the lights. Once it's completed, the Enbrighten companion app is your best friend for lighting modes, colors, presets and dimming options. It walks you through connecting them to your home's existing 2.4GHz Wi-Fi network, and then the control is up to you.

The lights come with presets in the companion app for the most popular holidays and occasions: Christmas, the Fourth of July, Mardi Gras and more. If you don't see one to your liking, create your own custom setting in under a minute. There's no need to attach the lights to a pesky timer. The app, which controls everything, has an option to create scenes for the time and days you want the lights on. My personal choice is dusk to dawn, which eliminates the need to change the time as the seasons and daylight hours change.

You can choose from 24-foot ($129.99) or 48-foot ($199.99) strands, or really be the talk of the neighborhood and go all out by connecting up to 750 feet of lights.

Lighting up your landscape for any holiday theme or year-round outdoor lighting is even easier with the Enbrighten Eternity Landscape Lights. These Wi-Fi-enabled LED puck lights make it easy to illuminate your landscaping with fully customizable colors and lighting programs.

Each compact light is mounted on a small tripod stake for quick installation; just plug the string into an AC outlet, connect it to your home Wi-Fi, and you're ready to go. The lights are rated IP67

Are men's hats 'jaunty' or dumb?

Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Dear Answer Angel Ellen: Can you referee a dispute I'm having with my partner? He says men in what he calls "jaunty" hats look fashionable, noteworthy, interesting and well-dressed. I think that, depending on the hat, they look silly, self-important, foolish or just plain dumb.

What is your opinion?

— Jen J.

Dear Jen: The number of men's hat styles is mind-blowing: fedora, newsboy, beret, porkpie, cowboy, and, of course, baseball.

I'm not sure which among these fall into your partner's "jaunty" category. On the right person and the right occasion, some of these look good, or at least, interesting.

You asked my opinion and I agree with you that, while many of these styles are attention-getting, many are problematic. Clearly, you've let your partner know what you think. He disagrees. In the grand universe of things to argue about, this is small, but still (to you) very irritating. The issue cries out for compromise. Maybe you suggest he wear his choice of headwear when he is not with you? Strike a bargain and move on to larger issues.

Dear Answer Angel Ellen: In a recent column you addressed the reliability of "best-of" beauty products in magazines and online. Are these lists actually just advertising plugs with no credible (much less scientific) testing?

I recently read an article claiming the top beauty products. I can't help but wonder if they are only looking at products that have been sent to them by manufacturers looking for placement. How do we know what their selection process is? Do they really review every lip gloss or mascara in the market? They reference staffers' opinions, but what is their process for ranking the items they do review, assuming they even review multiple products?

— Mary K.

Dear Mary: Thank you for your well-placed

Back to Life + Travel

Americans embrace naming their homes

Longtime European practice given modern, fanciful twist

House names have been practical, referring to the owner's occupation or referencing a characteristic that is helpful for postal deliveries in rural areas. Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Hambrick House may sound like a palatial estate in the English countryside. Instead, it's Caitlin Burke's 988-square-foot cottage in Dallas.

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Burke, who works in marketing, is not alone in this growing domestic trend. Americans are giving their houses names, and they're not just grand homes on serious acreage — or listings on Airbnb or Vrbo — but rather normal, everyday abodes in the suburbs, cities or countryside.

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Historically, names have also been practical, to refer to the owner's occupation ("Tailor's Cottage") or to reference a physical characteristic that is helpful for postal deliveries in rural areas.

"Throughout Europe, the concept of naming a house predates street addresses," said Christina Butler, provost and professor of historic preservation

Former Fruit of the Loom CEO sells Chicago apartment for $7.5M

Financier and former Fruit of the Loom President and CEO William F. Farley and his wife, Shelley, on Nov. 19 sold their seven-bedroom apartment on the 14th floor of the cooperative building at 209 E. Lake Shore Drive for $7.5 million. Jeff Lowe

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

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A self-made Rhode Island native who at one time co-owned the Chicago White Sox, Farley acquired Chicago conglomerate Northwest Industries, which had owned underwear maker Fruit of the Loom, in 1985 and took the firm public two years later. He was at the helm of Fruit of the Loom until 1999, when a reorganization concluded with its sale to Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway holding company. He now runs Liam Ventures, a private-equity firm.

In 1986, Farley bought one, 6,000-square-foot half-floor unit in the building. About six years later, he bought the other apartment, and he then hired noted Chicago architect Laurence Booth to combine them into a modernist-stye, 12,000-square-foot full-floor spread with 360-degree views.

In 2023, Farley told Elite Street that he had hosted "probably three" U.S. presidents in the apartment over the years, along with numerous U.S. senators, governors and mayors. The 18-story building was constructed in the mid-1920s and designed by architect Benjamin Marshall, who himself lived in a sixth-floor apartment during the building's first decade or so.

The co-op has seven full bathrooms, two half bathrooms, six wood-burning fireplaces, a 1,200-square-foot primary bedroom suite with a sitting room, a custom-paneled library, an office, a wine cellar, a family/media room and a home gym. The deal includes two guest apartments located on lower levels of the building, as well as four garage spaces.

The couple first listed the co-op for $15.9 million in 2023, lowering it to $13.9 million later that year. Last year, the couple cut the price to $11.9 million, $9.9 million and $9.5 million, and then earlier this

Back to Real Estate

Overcome subway tile challenges

The shorter joint lines of subway tile installations are staggered, much like brick installations. Tim Carter

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

I have been installing stunning green subway tile in my son's new basement bathroom. Subway tile is rectangular in shape. The grout joints between each tile have the same back-and-forth staggered pattern as mortar joints between bricks in a wall. It's a fascinating look; the colors, textures and crackled glazing in some tile will take your breath away.

This bath is next to a speakeasy bar. The overall theme of the entire basement remodeling project is Art Deco. Subway tile is most often installed horizontally, just as you see most brick walls. My son likes to test my skill level, so he said "Dad, I want to install the subway tile vertically on the walls in the bathroom. I think it will be stunning."

He was right. This bathroom, once finished with the sleek wall-hung toilet and vanity with a copper sink, might qualify for a Better Homes & Gardens cover photo.

Subway tile poses a unique challenge. Each row needs to be in a straight line. High-quality tile makes this easy because the tile is created with small self-spacing edges. The tile will stay straight as long as the first row is straight, level or plumb, and you apply the perfect amount of adhesive to the walls. You don't want adhesive to ooze up in between adjacent tiles. This extra adhesive can alter the alignment.

There are two primary types of adhesive you use to set ceramic tile. One is an organic mastic that resembles cool cake icing. It spreads with relative ease using a notched trowel. Organic mastic is fine for wall installations where heavy objects will not subject the tile to concentrated pressure. The mastic retains a small amount of flexibility once it's cured.

Ceramic tile is weak in tension. This means that if you press on a tile and it flexes, it will crack. I discovered this decades ago when I used mastic to set tile on a restaurant kitchen floor. The tiles cracked when heavy equipment or table legs pressed down on the tile. I had to remove the broken tiles and replace all of them using thinset mortar. Thinset is nearly identical to brick mortar and hardens like rock with no flexibility.

Back to Real Estate

Declining inherited property involves ‘disclaimer’ of assets

A probate or estate attorney may be able to help navigate the process. Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Q: My uncle passed away and left a will. I am the executor for the estate. However, there is a second person named in the will who lives out of the country. The will states that all of the property is to be equally divided between that person and me. What documentation needs to be drafted or filed if that person wants to give me their share? Can they simply sign documents from the other country to use here to close on the real estate?

A: The first question we have is whether this other person is in agreement and truly does not want to receive any property from your uncle. If the other person named in the will does not want to receive anything from your uncle’s estate, they might simply be able to provide you with the necessary documentation to file with the court in which they decline to accept the bequest.

When you decline an inheritance, it’s called a “disclaimer” or “renunciation” of the assets. The process varies significantly by state. Most states require that you disclaim the inheritance within nine months of the decedent’s death. Typically, you’ll have to write out your name and relationship to the deceased, the description of the property being disclaimed, and make a statement that you’re making an irrevocable disclaimer. Then, the document must be signed and, typically, notarized.

Before you get to that part, you’ll need to file the will with the local probate court where your uncle lived. Once you file the will, you proceed with the probate process. The probate court recognizes the person named in the will as the executor and issues paperwork authorizing that person to act as the representative for the estate.

Once you are recognized as the executor, you have powers to deal with the property that your uncle owned.

You can close bank accounts, sell assets and do everything it takes to settle your uncle’s estate including filing federal and state tax returns. One additional thing that you get to do is to sell your uncle’s home and any other assets he owned.

Back to Real Estate

West Loop 5-bed duplex with private elevator: $4.1M

Brent Borchardt photos

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Address: 900 W. Washington Blvd., Unit PHW, Chicago

Price: $4,100,000

Listing agent: Laura England, Compass, 312-543-3178

This five-bedroom, five-bathroom, top-floor duplex offers skyline views from a wraparound terrace. A private elevator opens directly into the unit, which has radiant-heated concrete floors, designer lighting and floor-to-ceiling, sound-insulated windows. The kitchen has Scavolini cabinetry paired with Sub-Zero and Wolf appliances. All of the bedrooms have an en suite bathroom. The primary bedroom also has a custom walk-in closet. The unit is in a building that is LEED Gold-certified for environmental sustainability and has hospital-grade air filtration along with a 75% green roof. Two garage parking spaces are included.

Some listing photos are "virtually staged," meaning they have been digitally altered to represent different furnishing or decorating options. To feature your luxury listing of $1,000,000 or more in Chicago Tribune's Dream Homes, send listing information and high-res photos to ctc-realestate@chicagotribune.com.

Back to Real Estate

Former Fruit of the Loom CEO sells Chicago apartment for $7.5M

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

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The couple first listed the co-op for $15.9 million in 2023, lowering it to $13.9 million later that year. Last year, the couple cut the price to $11.9 million, $9.9 million and $9.5 million, and then earlier this year, they reduced the apartment's asking price further, to $8.45 million and finally to $7.9 million.

Listing agent Jeffrey Lowe of Compass told Elite Street that Farley's now-former spread is "a wonderful apartment and we found a great buyer for it." He declined to identify the buyers, whom he did not represent. Public records do not yet identify the buyers.

"The Gold Coast is coming back," Lowe said. "It's just a matter of sellers understanding the valuation these days."

Farley did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the sale although he previously had told Elite Street that some of the unit's best features are the 360-degree views, the 11-foot ceilings, the large windows and two 45-foot-long galleries that are ideal for displaying art.

Actress Taraji P. Henson sells Streeterville condo for $1.2M:Academy Award-nominated actress Taraji P. Henson on Oct. 22 sold a three-bedroom, 2,159-square-foot condominium on the 36th floor of a Streeterville high-rise for $1.225 million.

Back to Real Estate

Americans embrace naming their homes

Longtime European practice given modern, fanciful twist

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

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Historically, names have also been practical, to refer to the owner's occupation ("Tailor's Cottage") or to reference a physical characteristic that is helpful for postal deliveries in rural areas.

"Throughout Europe, the concept of naming a house predates street addresses," said Christina Butler, provost and professor of historic preservation at the American College of the Building Arts in Charleston, South Carolina. "A lot of these names told you something about who owned the land, how big the holding was and sometimes what their title was."

The modern stateside version is decidedly more fanciful.

When Audrey Chabaud, 36, bought her first home in Houston last year, the house needed a complete gut remodel, and her twin sister, Ashley, wanted to be involved. Ashley playfully started referring to it as "The Dollhouse," since she was having so much fun weighing in on design decisions.

The hidden force behind performance

Personality can shape a team's trajectory, but 'vibes-first' hiring carries risks

Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

When it comes to hiring, technical skills usually get all the attention for many types of jobs. Can they code in this language? Do they have five years of experience in this field? Have they managed projects of this scale before? These questions dominate interviews. Yet, if you've been a leader for any amount of time, you know this: Skills may get someone in the door, but personality determines how far they go.

I have seen highly skilled hires fail within months because they lacked adaptability, empathy or the ability to collaborate with others. On the flip side, I have watched candidates who were slightly underqualified grow quickly into top performers because their energy, curiosity and resilience made them invaluable. Personality is not fluff. It is a hidden force that can shape the culture and trajectory of a team as much as technical ability. The real question is how much weight leaders should give to personality in hiring and how to strike the right balance.

Why personality matters

Hiring is not just about filling a role, it is about shaping the environment where your team spends most of their waking hours. A candidate who brings positivity, adaptability and strong interpersonal skills can elevate everyone around them. They help build trust, encourage collaboration and keep teams motivated through challenges.

Soft skills like empathy and resilience are also crucial in today's workplace. Remote and hybrid teams rely heavily on trust and strong communication. Innovation often comes from collaboration across diverse perspectives, not just technical expertise. When you hire for personality as well as skills, you are investing in someone who can strengthen performance and culture.

The risks of 'vibes-first' hiring

Of course, there is a risk in putting too much emphasis on personality. Gut instinct is not a strategy. I have seen leaders hire the most likable candidate in the room, only to realize months later

Changes to charitable giving coming in 2026

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

The charitable giving season is upon us and changes are afoot. While many people give because they want to do good, the tax rules around philanthropy have always been an added sweetener.

Although nothing has changed for 2025, the recently passed tax bill will usher in three major alterations to charitable giving in 2026, two of which limit the tax benefit of charitable giving for taxpayers who itemize their deductions.

For those in the highest tax bracket (37 percent), there will be a new cap on charitable deductions, from 37 cents on the dollar to 35 cents on the dollar.

Additionally, all itemizers will need to give more than 0.5% of their Adjusted Gross Income to start claiming a deduction. For example, with an AGI of $200,000, total gifts must be more than $1,000 to be deductible.

To get ahead of these new tax rules, one strategy to consider is to open and fund a Donor Advised Fund (DAF). DAFs allow you to contribute cash, appreciated assets (stocks, mutual funds, exchange traded funds, and in some cases, private equity or hedge fund interests, crypto, and restricted stock), take an immediate tax deduction on the contribution, and then grant to an eligible IRS-qualified public charity over months or years.

I recently interviewed Fred Kaynor, managing director of DAFGiving360, a subsidiary of investment giant Charles Schwab. Kaynor says that the "give now, decide later," aspect of DAFs provides donors with "the flexibility to make year-end tax moves before Dec. 31, without feeling rushed to pick specific organizations." While you decide, the money in the DAF can be invested with the potential to grow tax-free.

The third change to charitable giving will provide a tax benefit even to those who take the standard deduction. In 2026, standard filers will be entitled to a $1,000 charitable deduction ($2,000 for joint filers), on top of the statutory standard deduction amount. The deduction applies to cash gifts only (not securities) that go directly to a qualifying public charity (not to donor-advised funds).

Here are some best practices.

Be alert to fraud

Scammers use names that sound like well-known charities to confuse people. Ask for the charity's name, website and mailing address so you can independently confirm the information by using the IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search tool to verify its legitimacy.

Pay with traceable methods

Never donate to an organization that asks for payment via a gift card or by wiring money. The safest way to pay is to use a credit card or send a check.

Don't overshare

When to consider naming a trust as IRA beneficiary

Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Readers of my column know I emphasize the importance of naming beneficiaries for every IRA account. Many ask under what circumstances they should consider naming a trust as an IRA beneficiary.

In a recent Slott report, Andy Ives, an IRA analyst and certified financial planner for the Slott group, summarized the disadvantages of naming a trust as the beneficiary of an IRA account as well when there are advantages to do so.

Disadvantages of naming a trust as beneficiary

A trust should not be named as a beneficiary of an IRA account unless there is a legitimate reason to do so.

In no situation is there an income tax advantage in naming a trust as a beneficiary.

In fact, in most situations the income tax would be higher if you named the trust as a beneficiary. In a trust, tax rates reach 37% when income is more than $15,650. By comparison, if you file your tax return jointly, you would not reach the 37% level until your taxable income exceeded $751,600. If you file singly, your taxable income would have to exceed $626,350 before you reached the 37% level.

After the death of an IRA owner, trust beneficiaries have complex issues. Trust beneficiaries cannot simply establish their own inherited IRA. In that situation, you would have to open a trust-held inherited IRA, and depending on the trust document, the trust beneficiaries could be limited regarding access to the trust assets.

Advantages

There are situations in which there are advantages in naming the trust as a beneficiary.

Minor as beneficiary: Minors are not able to make distribution decisions when they inherit IRAs. When a minor is named as a beneficiary, the court could require that a guardian be appointed to act on the minor's behalf. Naming the trust as a beneficiary would avoid this situation.

Back to Real Estate

Manage finances while helping people in need

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

This is the time of year when I typically offer financial planning advice to those who have the flexibility to make charitable gifts or plan ahead for taxes. But this year, more than ever, I am acutely aware of the millions of people to whom that advice doesn't apply.

They are hard-working Americans struggling to make ends meet — to feed and clothe their children, to keep paying the rent or the mortgage, and to provide health insurance for themselves and their families. Or they are seniors whose budgets are strained by rising out-of-pocket medical expenses.

The latest studies show that in 2025 as much as half of credit card spending each month (and in some studies as much as 72% of credit card spending) is done to cover essentials like food, utilities, prescriptions and gas. The latest statistics on credit card balances also don't fully reflect the debt consumers are carrying. That's because the "buy now, pay later" industry that offers "four easy payments" does not report outstanding balances as consumer debt. But that debt can snowball — especially with holiday purchases.

So, my first year-end money tip is to talk about the issue of holiday presents with your family members. Not only your teens with their first credit cards, but to parents of young children who want to put presents under the tree. And, toughest of all, if you have aging parents, please tell them to stop the traditional holiday gifts and focus on their own tight budgets. You can relieve them of the stress of finding gifts for multiple grandchildren.

And now, for those who have flexibility to plan, here are some year-end steps.

Take your required minimum distributions

If you're 73 or older you must take an RMD from your retirement accounts. Do not wait until the last minute, as fines are significant.

Consider charitable contributions

If you're in the fortunate position of not needing to spend the money from your RMD, you can follow the rules on giving money from your IRA directly to a qualified charity. It will be counted against your RMD amount. But make sure the charity actually receives, and acknowledges, the contribution before year-end. There are age and gift limitations to this opportunity.

Be aware of the annual gift exclusion

This year, you are allowed to make a gift of as much as $19,000 to anyone, or multiple people, without filing a gift tax return. This annual gift exclusion does not count against your huge estate tax exemption. For wealthy families, it is an opportunity to give money away tax-free. However, do not impoverish yourself in your old age just because you want to use this exemption!

Make 529 plan contributions

This is the time to add to your child's or grandchild's 529 college savings plan. It is a long-lasting holiday gift that grows tax-free for college expenses, and the account has minimal impact on financial aid.

Back to Real Estate

Start with ‘why’ for a business built to last

Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Is it time for you to find a heroic mission? Do you want to create and lead a business worth fighting for — one that’s built to last? I’m sure for any entrepreneur, the answer is an emphatic yes! However, while it’s easy to write your business’s mission statement, finding one that will actually move the needle on performance takes some work. Here’s how to figure out the “why” behind your business and why that matters.

Start with your ‘why’

When you’re buried in the day-to-day of running a business, it’s easy to get lost in the weeds. However, to build a remarkable business, you need to work backward. You need to find the unifying emotion that underpins everything you do.

Your “why” isn’t your product, your service or your brand. It’s the higher purpose that gets you up at 5 a.m. when everyone else is still in bed. It’s the thing that will keep you going when the chips are down, when everyone else is ready to throw in the towel.

As the leader of your business, finding your “why” means having a direct line of sight to your reason for being. You wake up every day believing that the business you’re building is important and worthwhile. That belief guides how you think, how you act, how you move through the world.

Make yourself essential

Here’s a simple test I would like you to consider: If you shut your doors tomorrow, then would anyone really miss you? The answer must be an unequivocal “yes.”

To build a business that people miss, you have to deliver something special. You have to offer them something unique, unlike what everyone else is offering. It has to be something that they literally cannot get anywhere else.

You don’t need to be different for the sake of being different. You need to be special and become a category of one. Your business must be so good at something and uncommon that your customers

Back to Real Estate

Wealth gap solution may be employee ownership

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

When an X user recently pointed out the eye-popping increase in billionaires' wealth since 2015, entrepreneur Mark Cuban, a billionaire himself, responded with his opinion on why, but he urged followers to consider a different question: "Why are we not giving incentives to companies to require them to give shares in their companies to all employees, at the same percentage of cash earnings as the CEO?" Cuban said.

It is the right question to be asking. Because while the debate over wealth inequality continues, the solution has been hiding in plain sight for decades.

The top 10% of U.S. households now control 67% of all wealth, while the bottom half holds just 2.5%. The typical American worker approaches retirement with about $4,000 in savings, which is less than the cost of one month in an assisted living facility. That imbalance is not sustainable, economically or socially.

The fix does not require new legislation or another corporate responsibility pledge. It lies in a proven model that has been quietly transforming companies and communities for 50 years: employee ownership.

Embraced by Silicon Valley

Silicon Valley figured this out long ago. Equity compensation has been the foundation of the tech sector's innovation economy since the 1970s. Stock options allowed startups to attract world-class talent without paying top-tier salaries, align employee incentives with company performance and build wealth for workers who might otherwise never own an asset.

Yet outside of tech, broad-based ownership remains rare. Fewer than 7,000 U.S. companies — mostly in traditional sectors like manufacturing, construction, and distribution — operate under an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP). The results, however, mirror the Valley's success.

Employee-owned firms grow more than 2% faster per year than their peers and are half as likely to go bankrupt. During the 2008 financial crisis, they laid off workers at only one-third the rate of conventional firms. For employees, the impact is just as powerful. ESOP participants hold 92% higher median household wealth, twice the retirement savings, and 33% higher median income than comparable workers.

This is not philanthropy. It is a durable, market-tested strategy that drives growth, resilience and equity at the same time.

The timing is right

Several trends make this the perfect moment to bring ownership to scale.

A massive generational handoff is underway: Ten thousand baby boomers retire each day, many owners of successful small and midsize businesses with no succession plan. Transferring ownership to employees keeps those businesses rooted in their communities, preserves good jobs and rewards founders with fair market value.

This mindset shift makes raising teens less stressful

Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

My daughter is turning 11, and while she is not a teenager yet, she's also not the sweet, unselfconscious kid she was just a couple of years ago. Her moods are stormier, her bonds with her friends more intense, and her eye rolls in my direction more dramatic. I am suddenly, hopelessly "cringe."

I love her blossoming independence and sharp sense of humor. But some days, I remember my own difficult relationship with my parents during my teen years (sorry, mom) and dread what's to come.

I am willing to bet plenty of other entrepreneur parents in my situation feel the same. As we watch our adorable kids morph into ungainly teens, we worry not just for our children, but also for the sanity and stability of the rest of the family. But what if our dread was likely to make navigating the teenage years more challenging? Could a simple shift in expectations make the teen years a happier, more serene time for everyone?

That's what new research by Northwestern University developmental psychologist Yang Qu and his collaborators suggests. The new study, recently published in the journal Child Development, offers those raising teenagers a simple but powerful way to improve how their kids feel and behave through this tricky period.

Positive mindset, positive behavior

It's great watching your kids grow into themselves. But in America at least, teenagers also have a (well deserved) reputation for boneheaded risk-taking and emotional instability. Media chatter about the youth mental health crisis hasn't helped put parental minds at ease.

This largely negative view of the teen years isn't universal, however. "In many Western cultures, the teen years are often viewed through a 'storm and stress' lens of rebellion, moodiness, and irresponsibility," Qu told Inc. "In other cultures, like in China, adolescence is seen more positively, as a key time for learning how to become a responsible

How to deal with the inevitable office jerk

Dreamstime

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

There's always at least one in every office. The employee who regales everyone with crude jokes. They are full of gratuitous insults or off-color commentary. Research shows that a shocking 80% of employees say their workplace is toxic.

You might try to ignore this co-worker and be the bigger person. Perhaps you avoid them, fake a smile, or use up your own valuable mental resources and actually befriend the bully. What's easy to forget, however, is that silence is not strategy — it's permission.

There's some good news. Dealing with toxic people in the workplace doesn't have to be as hard as you might think. As with the playground bully, sometimes all it takes is to shine some light on their actions. In the workplace, the trick is to select the appropriate person to light up to have the greatest leverage.

As it happens, I wrote an entire book about dealing with toxic people: "Wait, I'm Working With Who?!?" However, here are a couple particularly effective tips for dealing with jerks in your office or on the other side of that Zoom call.

Indirect intervention

Bombarding a difficult person with complaints will only make them defensive and cause them to circle the wagons against you. A more subtle and healthier intervention is the indirect version. It works particularly well when the behavior is annoying the entire group or in a social setting.

Let's say someone from a different department — a friend of one of the members of your team — joins one of your meetings. Then, they start making crass or inappropriate comments. Call them out for their bad behavior right then and there, neutralizing the situation—a.k.a., a direct intervention. Then, take your employee aside after the meeting and explain how that kind of behavior is not tolerated on the team. Ask them to convey that message to their friend from the other department.

Why does this work? Simple. The jerk will be more

2025 Mercedes G-Wagon goes electric with G580

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

In 2025, Mercedes takes the flagship G-Wagon electric, and the G580 EQ is born.

As a long-time lover of the boxy-exterior styling of the modern day SUV, Mercedes continues to ride on the long-lasting reins of the G-Wagon.

Similar to the Land Rover Defender and entry-level SUV such as the Honda Element and Dodge Nitro, the boxy exterior shape still has a great demand in the SUV market today.

In Grasso's Garage, the G-Wagon is a huge want given its off-roading ability, styling and history of exceptional reliability; the G-Wagon earns all the accolades.

With the G-Wagon going electric in 2025, we recognize the new G-Wagon nameplate as the G580, confirming its amount of horsepower as 579. As torque-y as can be, and over 850 pound-feet of it, the G580 is a dream luxury cruiser that has no problem pinning you to the seat and getting out of the way quickly and smoothly.

As you float in this almost 7,000-pound tank on wheels, the appeal and interior is what continues to ensure the MB is at the height of its game. Standard interior options on the G580 include Burmester 3D surround sound audio, comfort package, keyless start, multicolor ambient lighting and power sunroof, while all-wheel drive, low range gearbox, torque vectoring and a 200 kW DC fast charging system is also standard. Upgrades on our G580 tester were a dark blue nonmetallic exterior paint, black panel radiator grille, black logo package, leather grab handles, night package and an interior plus package. To say that the G580 is luxury on wheels and in style is an understatement.

Packed with a $161K base price, the G580 is a dream on wheels. Its electric engine delivers nicely for those local travelers looking to make a statement while enjoying their everyday ride around town. It has great interior comfort, storage space and that long history of great exterior appeal.

Grasso's Garage is here for you! Are you in the market for a new car? I would be happy to provide my honest input. All you have to do is email me: marc.grasso@ bostonherald.com.

Back to Real Estate

2025 Mercedes Benz G580

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

2025 Mercedes Benz G580

MSRP: $161,500

MPGe: 68 city / 56 highway / 62.2 as tested

As tested: $183,250

Go big

and go home Experts compare Ford Expedition and GMC Yukon to determine which large SUV is the better buy

2026 Ford Expedition. Ford Motor Co.

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

Let's say you need a vehicle with room for more than five passengers, a large cargo area, and the ability to pull a heavy trailer. A full-size three-row SUV should work well, but which one?

The most significant news this year is the redesigned Ford Expedition. Ford has given its biggest SUV a complete makeover with a more upscale interior, new technology features and a novel split-opening tailgate.

It's a compelling pick for a big SUV, but it's not the only one vying for your attention. The GMC Yukon got its own refresh for 2025. It's not as comprehensive as the Expedition's, but it too features a significant interior and technology overhaul that further distances it from its mechanical twin, the Chevy Tahoe.

Edmunds' auto experts tested both to determine which one is the better buy.

Power and fuel economy

The Expedition has a turbocharged 3.5-liter V6 in two versions. The standard-output V6 produces 400 horsepower and 480 lb-ft of torque, while the high-output version pumps out 440 horsepower and 510 lb-ft. EPA-estimated fuel economy is 19 mpg combined with standard rear-wheel drive and 18 mpg combined with optional four-wheel drive.

The Yukon's engine choices are an interesting contrast. The standard 5.3-liter V8 produces 355 horsepower and 383 lb-ft, while the 6.2-liter V8 standard on top trim levels has a more competitive 420 horsepower and 460 lb-ft. Fuel economy is up to 17 mpg combined for the 5.3-liter V8; the 6.2-liter gets 16 mpg combined.

At the Edmunds test track, an Expedition with the high-output V6 accelerated from zero to 60 mph in 5.5 seconds. That's a second quicker than the Yukon with its bigger V8. The Yukon does have an efficiency ace up its sleeve, however. You can get an optional turbodiesel six-cylinder that makes 305 horsepower and 495 lb-ft and gets up to an EPA-estimated 23 mpg combined.

Back to Real Estate

No window, no problem

Polestar 4 chases Tesla with innovative digital tech that's changing SUV's tools

The 2026 Polestar 4 is aimed at the volume, compact luxury SUV segment. Henry Payne/Detroit News

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

On two-lane Route 117 in Quebec, I jumped into the left lane, nailed the throttle in my 544-horsepower, 2026 Polestar 4 and — ZOT! — was past the truck in front of me in the blink of an eye. I glanced in the rear camera mirror, pulled back into the right lane, and gave the truck a wave.

Except the Polestar 4 has no rear window, and the trucker never saw my gesture. Haw.

Polestar's latest compact SUV is quick, cool and — as its clever rear design implies — innovative; just like Tesla models that pioneered the EV segment over the last dozen years. With Tesla in mind, Volvo (and its Chinese owners) spun off its Polestar performance badge in 2017 as a full-line electric vehicle brand. Where Volvo has developed EVs with its safety and design north stars, Polestar has leaned into speed and innovation.

The fourth — and most important model to date in Polestar's young journey — the 4 is a Scandinavian Tesla Model Y. Call it Polesla.

Like the camera mirror in Tesla's Cybertruck, the 4's rearview unit is necessitated by its radical rear roof design. Determined to make the compact SUV look like a racy sports coupe (while maintaining utilitarian rear seat and cargo space), the Polestar 4 does without a rear window, confident that the advance of digital mirrors and blind-spot assist would cover the void.

It works, though old habits (like my trucker wave) will die hard.

It's a reminder that digital technology is changing every tool in the automobile. Cadillac innovated the camera mirror last decade. At the Detroit Grand Prix in 2018, I asked race car driver Jorden Taylor what his 600-horsepower, $730,000 winged Cadillac DPi.V.R cyborg shared with a production Cadillac.

"Two things," said the affable race pilot. "The V-8 engine block and the camera mirror. You can't see out of these mid-engine race cars, and the camera mirror allows me an unobstructed view out back so I can see my competitors and slower traffic around

Back to Real Estate

2026 Polestar 4

{{{Articles.Byline.1}}}

2026 Polestar 4

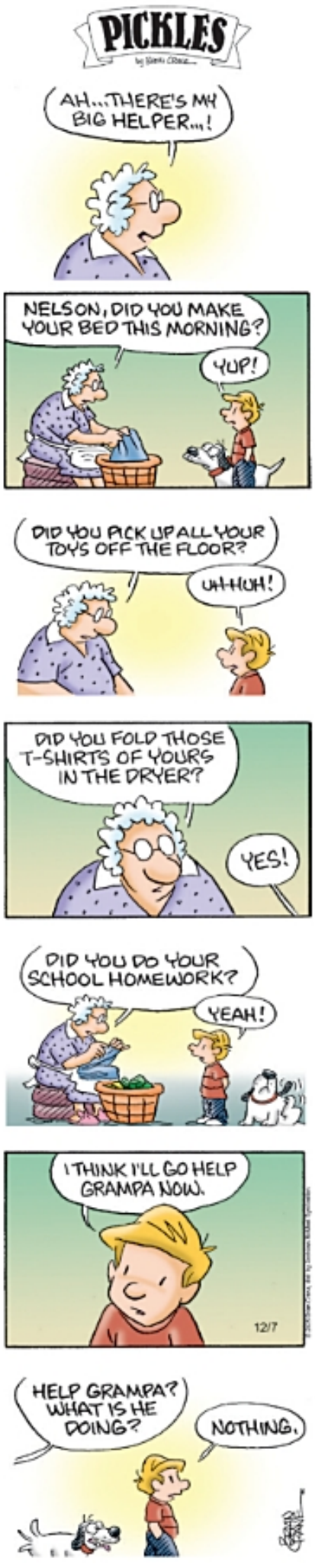
Price: Base $57,400, including $1,400 destination charge ($64,300 Dual Motor as tested)

Powerplant: Lithium-ion battery pack mated to single/dual electric motors

Horsepower/Torque: 272/ 253 pound-feet (single rear motor); 544/ 506 pound-feet (dual front and rear motors)

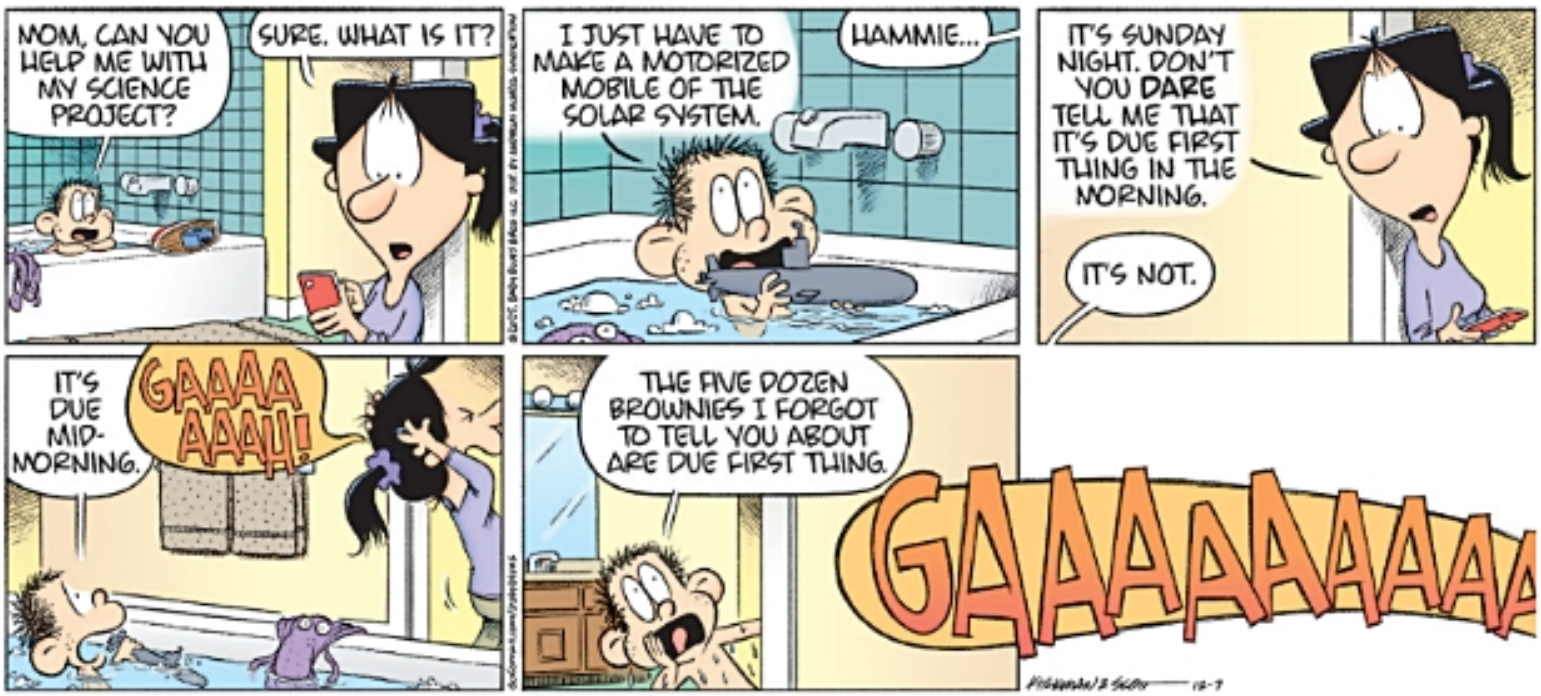
Performance: Zero to 60 mph, 3.7 seconds (mfr.); top speed, 124 mph

Range: 310 miles (single motor), 280 miles (dual front and rear motors)


PICKLES
AH...THERE'S MY BIG HELPER...!
NELSON, DID YOU MAKE YOUR BED THIS MORNING?
YUP!
DID YOU PICK UP ALL YOUR TOYS OFF THE FLOOR?
UH-HUH!
DID YOU FOLD THOSE T-SHIRTS OF YOURS IN THE DRYER?
YES!
DID YOU DO YOUR SCHOOL HOMEWORK?
YEAH!
I THINK I'LL GO HELP GRAMPA NOW.
12/7
HELP GRAMPA? WHAT IS HE DOING?
NOTHING.

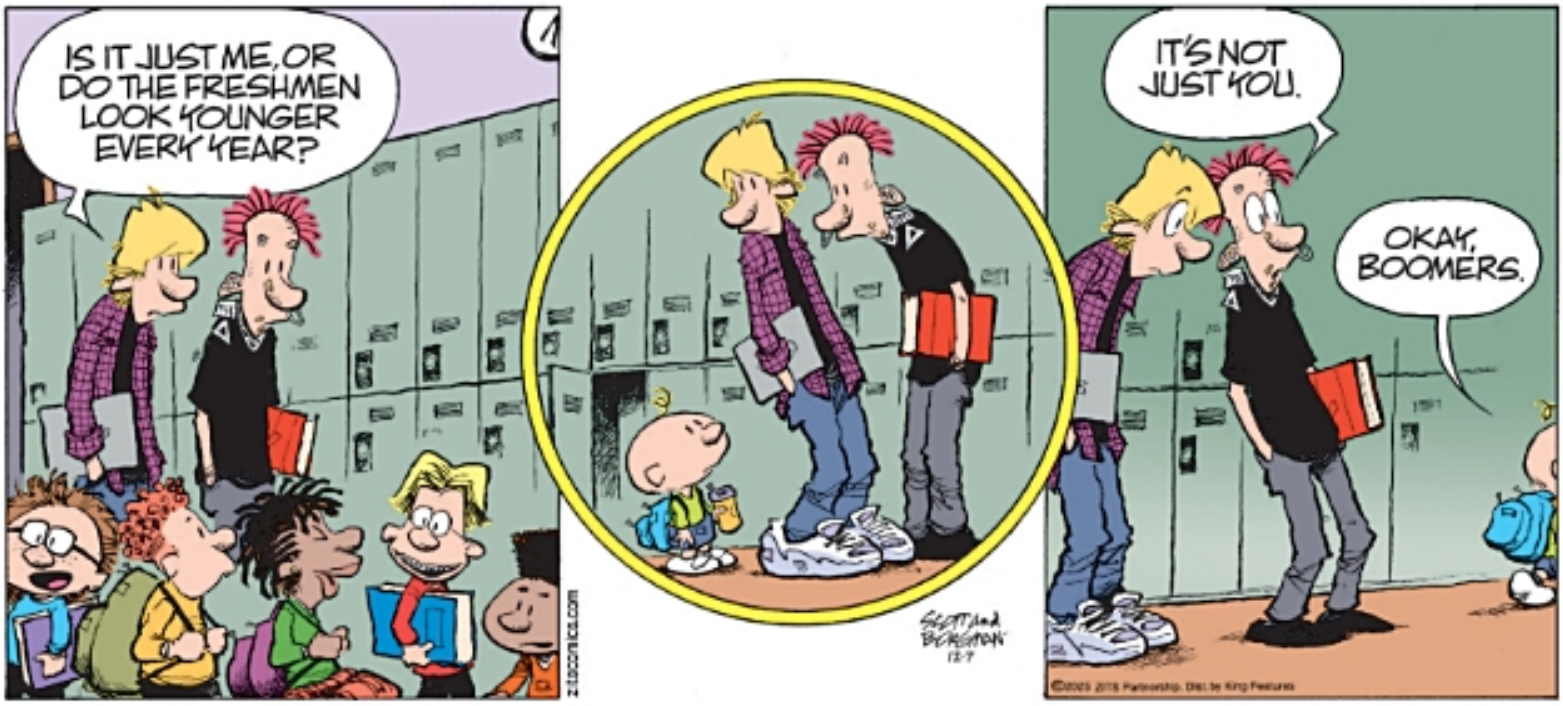
Back to Comics

Baby Blues By Rick Kirkman and Jerry Scott


MOM, CAN YOU HELP ME WITH MY SCIENCE PROJECT?
SURE. WHAT IS IT?
I JUST HAVE TO MAKE A MOTORIZED MOBILE OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM.
HAMMIE...
IT'S SUNDAY NIGHT. DON'T YOU DARE TELL ME THAT IT'S DUE FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.
IT'S NOT.
IT'S DUE MID-MORNING.
GAAAA AAAH!
THE FIVE DOZEN BROWNIES I FORGOT TO TELL YOU ABOUT ARE DUE FIRST THING.
GAAAAAAAAAAA

Back to Comics

Zits By Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman



Back to Comics

Grand Avenue By Mike Thompson

LET'S GO TO A SHOPPING MALL SO YOU CAN SIT ON SANTA'S LAP.
THAT'S A THING OF THE PAST.
IT'S A TRADITION!
MAYBE WITH YOUR GENERATION, BUT NOT OURS.
IT'LL BE FUN AND CREATE LASTING MEMORIES!
BUT NOBODY DOES THAT ANYMORE.
12-7
MANY KIDS STILL SIT ON SANTA'S LAP!
I'M TALKING ABOUT GOING TO A SHOPPING MALL.

Back to Comics

WUMO

by Wulff & Morgenthaler

Back to Comics

Frazz
MY GRANDPA SAID HIS GRANDPA WOULD BLOW SMOKE RINGS IN THE PARLOR. I TOLD HIM I JUST LEARNED TO BLOW BUBBLE RINGS IN THE POOL. HE SAID THE FUTURE IS LOOKING BETTER ALL THE TIME.
YOU JUST HAVE TO KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.

Back to Comics

ANIMAL CRACKERS
By Mike Osbun
YOU'VE REACHED SANTA'S HOTLINE LISTINGS...
YOU MIND HOLDING THIS FOR ME?
ALL DONE!
WHERE DO YOU WANT ME TO PLUG THIS IN?
TRY ONE OF THE OTHER COMIC FEATURES.

Back to Comics

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE
By Lynn Johnston
ELLY? CONNIE!
HI, PAMELA!
LOOK AT YOU WITH ALL OF YOUR PARCELS! - I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE NOT FINISHED YET!!
I HAVE ALL OF MY CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DONE BY OCTOBER AND WRAPPED BY THE FIRST OF DECEMBER.
MY CARDS ARE DONE, AND MY CHRISTMAS DINNER IS IN THE FREEZER, ALL READY FOR THE HOLIDAYS!
WOW!
THAT'S WONDERFUL, PAMELA!
YES - I'M SO IMPRESSED!
WHY DO SOME PEOPLE GET READY FOR CHRISTMAS SO DARNED EARLY?!
... SO THEY CAN SPEND THE REST OF DECEMBER IRRITATING PEOPLE LIKE US.

Back to Comics

MISTER BOFFO
"TAKE WHAT YOU WANT, BUT SPEND WHAT YOU TAKE"
-CODE OF THE TRUSTAFARIAN-
AND HIS "WOOFER DOG" WEEDERMAN
BY JOE MARTIN
I'M STILL IN THE MAILROOM SORTING ENVELOPES...
WITH THE BOTTOM-FEEDERS...
ANOTHER WAY TO TELL WHEN YOU MAY NOT HAVE MARRIED THE FOCUSED DRIVEN, WORLD BEATER YOU THOUGHT
ME AND RILEY STARTED IN THE MAIL ROOM TOGETHER TWENTY YEARS AGO!
WHILE HE'S LORDING IT OVER ME, OUT THERE IN THE WARE HOUSE, LOADING TRUCKS WITH THE BIG SHOT HOITY-TOITY SWELLS
JOE MARTIN
12-7-25

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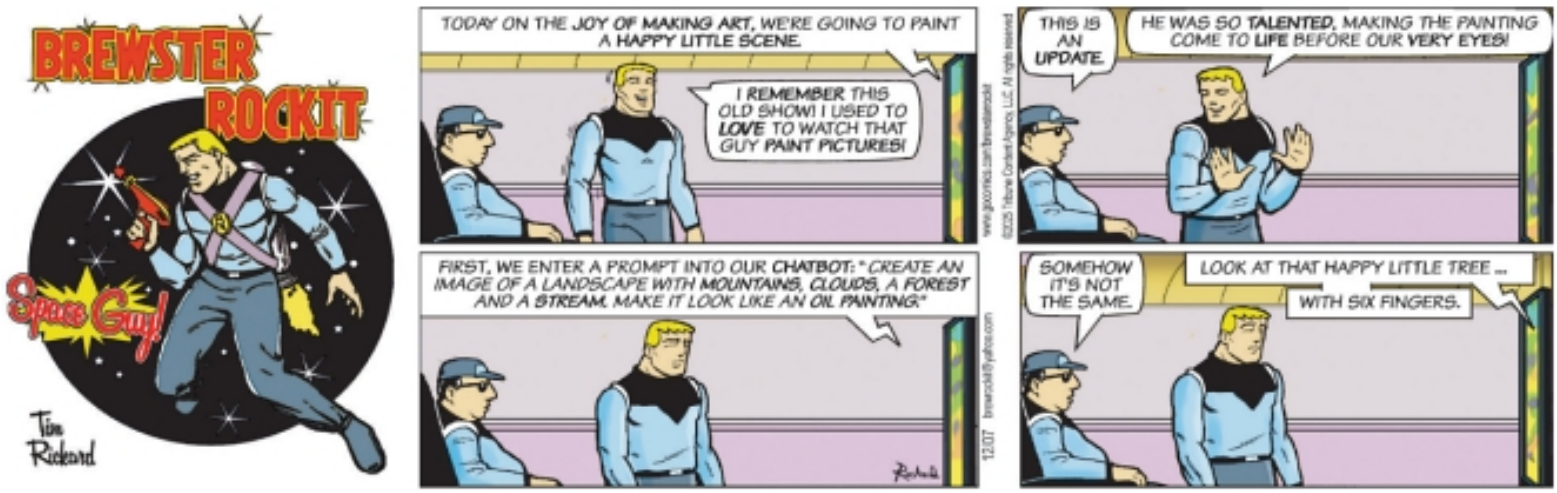
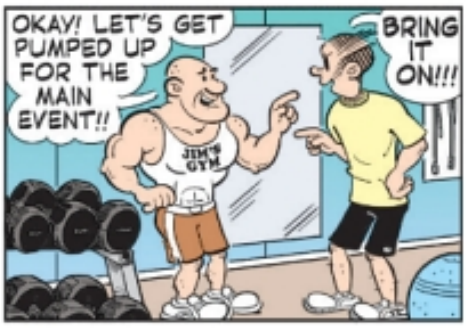

BREWSTER ROCKIT
Space Guy!
Tim Rickard
TODAY ON THE JOY OF MAKING ART, WE'RE GOING TO PAINT A HAPPY LITTLE SCENE.
I REMEMBER THIS OLD SHOW! I USED TO LOVE TO WATCH THAT GUY PAINT PICTURES!
FIRST, WE ENTER A PROMPT INTO OUR CHATBOT: "CREATE AN IMAGE OF A LANDSCAPE WITH MOUNTAINS, CLOUDS, A FOREST AND A STREAM. MAKE IT LOOK LIKE AN OIL PAINTING."
12/07
THIS IS AN UPDATE.
HE WAS SO TALENTED, MAKING THE PAINTING COME TO LIFE BEFORE OUR VERY EYES!
SOMEHOW IT'S NOT THE SAME.
LOOK AT THAT HAPPY LITTLE TREE ...
WITH SIX FINGERS.

Back to Comics

Blondie By Dean Young and John Marshall



www.blondie.com

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Back to Comics

Take It From the Tinkersons By Bill Bettwy

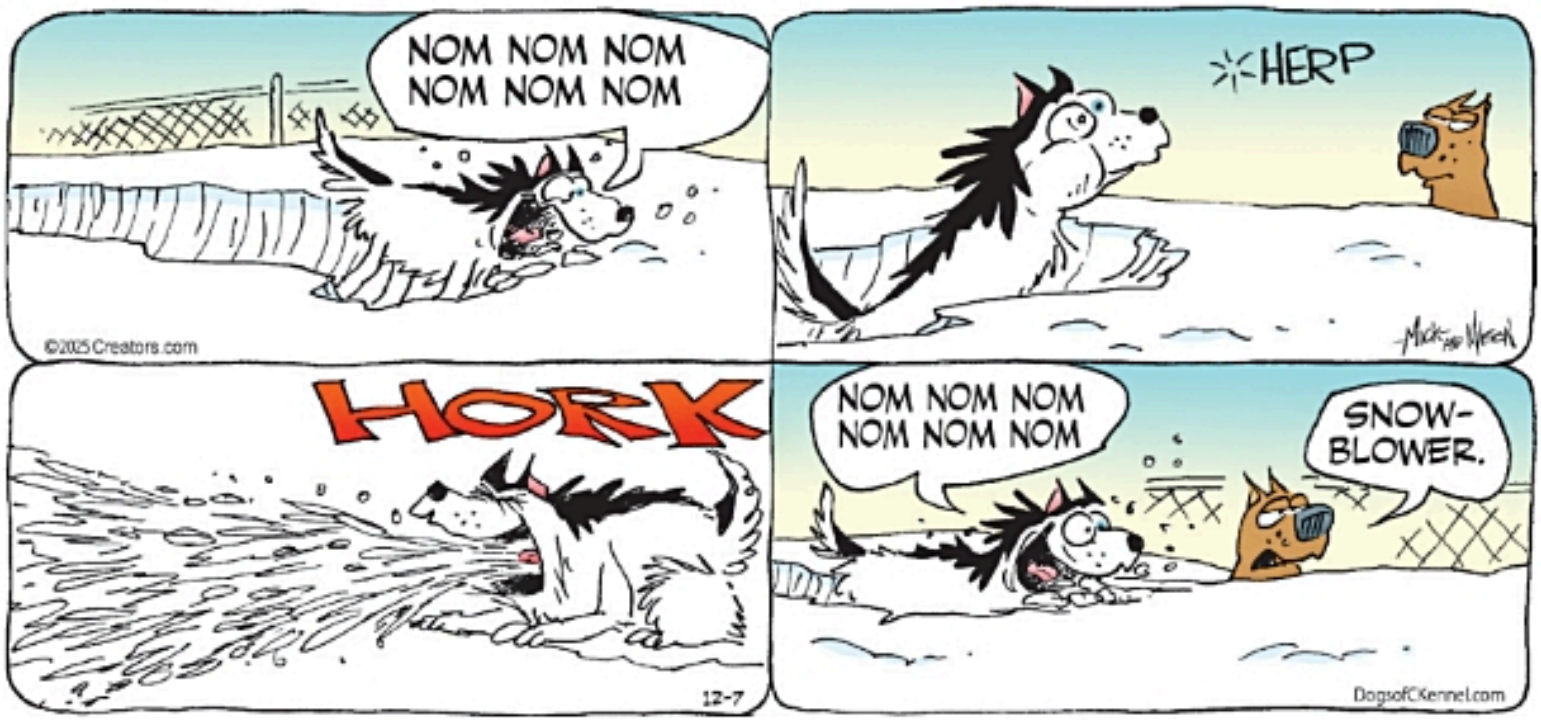
FRANKIE, NO!
FRANKIE KEEPS EATING PINE NEEDLES AND DRINKING TREE WATER.
I THINK WE NEED TO GET RID OF THE TREE BEFORE HE GETS SICK.
NO, WE CAN'T GET RID OF THE TREE! WHERE WOULD SANTA PUT THE GIFTS?!
YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE A TREE FOR SANTA TO LEAVE GIFTS.
OH, THEN GET RID OF IT.

Back to Comics

FoxTrot By Bill Amend

Back to Comics

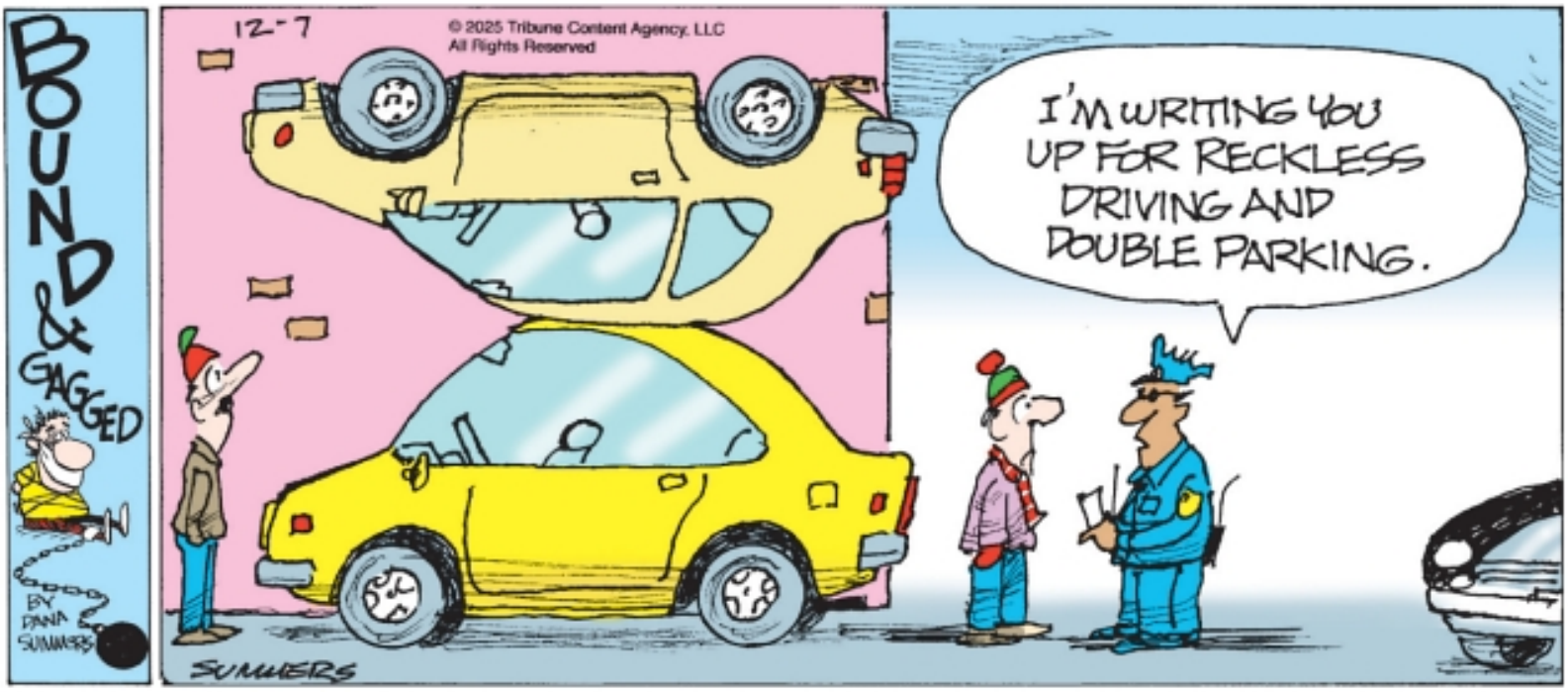
Dogs of C-Kennel By Mick and Mason Mastroianni



Back to Comics

PEANUTS
featuring
"Good ol' CharlieBrown"
by Schulz
THIS BLIZZARD IS GETTING WORSE, MEN
ANYONE HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS?
OKAY, WE'LL ALL FOLLOW WOODSTOCK... HE SAYS HE CAN LEAD US TO THE PERFECT SPOT TO SPEND THE NIGHT...
?
WOODSTOCK IS A BORN LEADER!

Back to Comics



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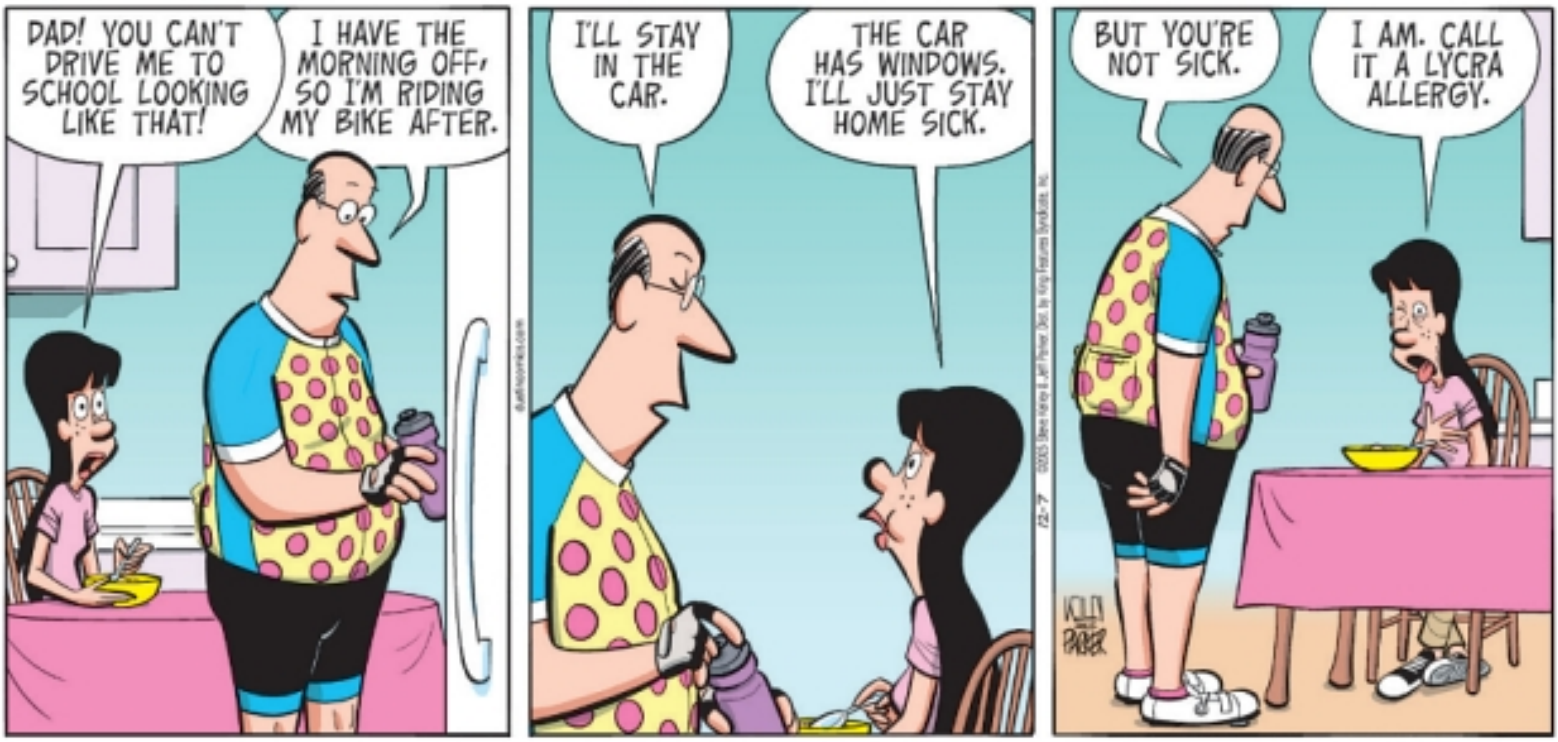
BROOM-HILDA
BY RUSSELL MYERS
GRUMBLE
I'D LOVE TO GO DANCING, GAYLORD.
WHY DON'T YOU?
NOBODY WILL GO DANCING WITH ME.
MAYBE SOMEDAY I'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO WILL.
UNTIL THEN I'LL HOLD OUT HOPE.
I WARNED HER SHE'D SMELL LIKE SWEATY BEAR BUT SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO MIND.

Back to Comics

Dustin By Steve Kelley and Jeff Parker


DAD! YOU CAN'T DRIVE ME TO SCHOOL LOOKING LIKE THAT!
I HAVE THE MORNING OFF, SO I'M RIDING MY BIKE AFTER.
I'LL STAY IN THE CAR.
THE CAR HAS WINDOWS. I'LL JUST STAY HOME SICK.
BUT YOU'RE NOT SICK.
I AM. CALL IT A LYCRA ALLERGY.

Back to Comics

HÄGAR
THE HORRIBLE
by DIK BROWNE
♪ YO-O HEAVE HO! YO-O HEAVE HO! ♫
MAYBE WE SHOULD CHANGE OUR TUNE!
HUALP
WE NEED TO FIND A PLACE TO SLEEP!
THAT GULLY IS PERFECT! WE'LL BE OUT OF SIGHT!
FORGET THAT!
I HAVE FAMILY IN THIS VILLAGE WHO WOULD LOVE TO PUT US UP FOR THE NIGHT!
IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU, UNCLE ULRIK!
SO HAPPY TO HAVE YOUR BUSINESS, NEPHEW!
MEET US AT THE GULLY IN THE MORNING!
ULRIK'S LUXE HOTEL
SINGLE 100 KR
DOUBLE 200 KR
TRIPLE 300 KR
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12-7

Back to Comics

The Lockhorns
By Bunny Hoest and John Reiner

"IT'S FINALLY HAPPENED... I CAN'T REMEMBER A SINGLE PHONE NUMBER."

"LEROY WANTS TO HAVE HIS CAKE, PIE, DANISH, BROWNIES, COOKIES AND DONUTS AND EAT THEM, TOO."

"SAY SOMETHING NICE ABOUT LORETTA? OKAY... YOU HAVE EXCELLENT TASTE IN HUSBANDS."

"PLEASE STOP REFERRING TO HER VOWS AS A VEILED THREAT."

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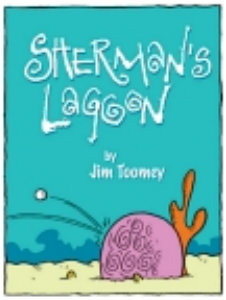

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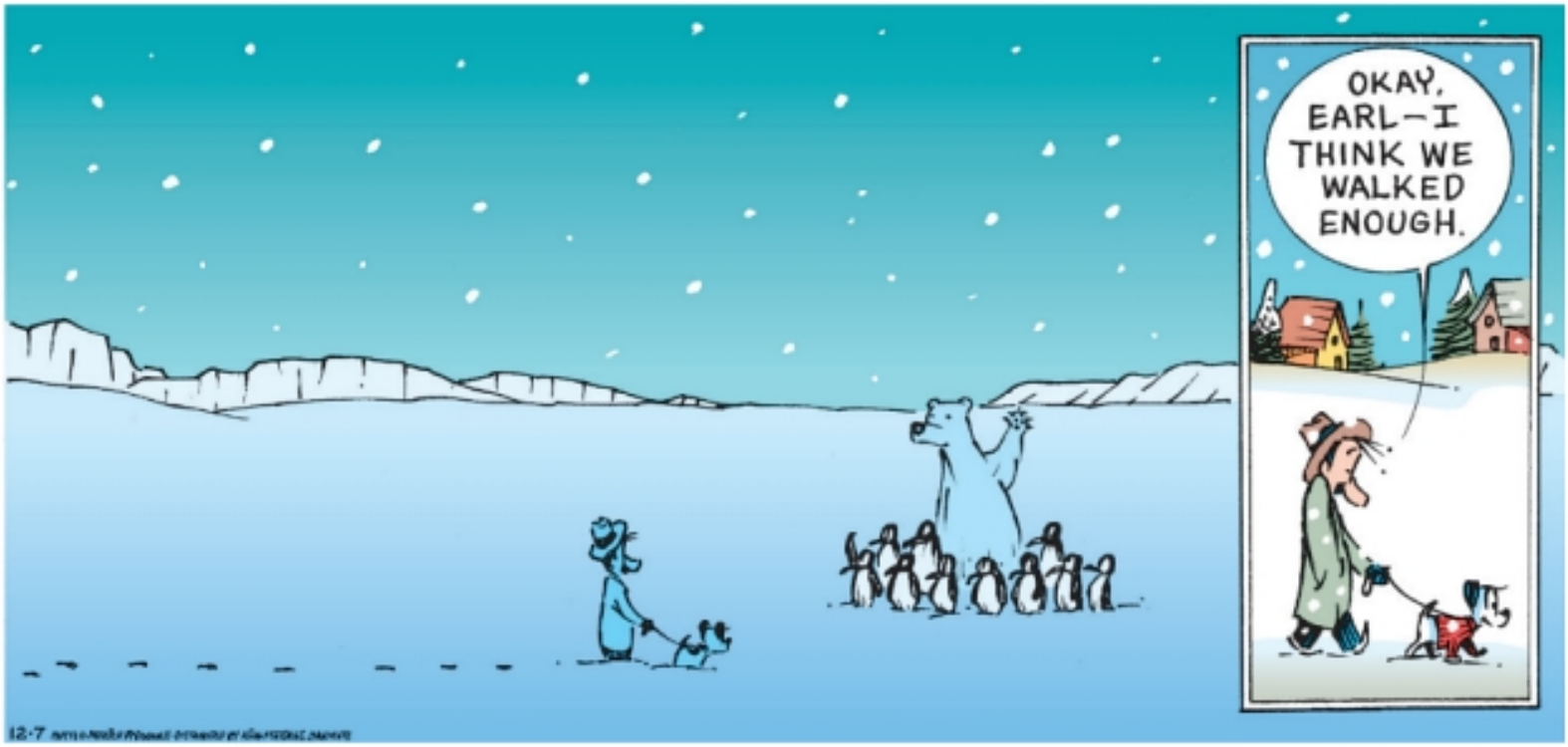
Mutts By Patrick McDonnell



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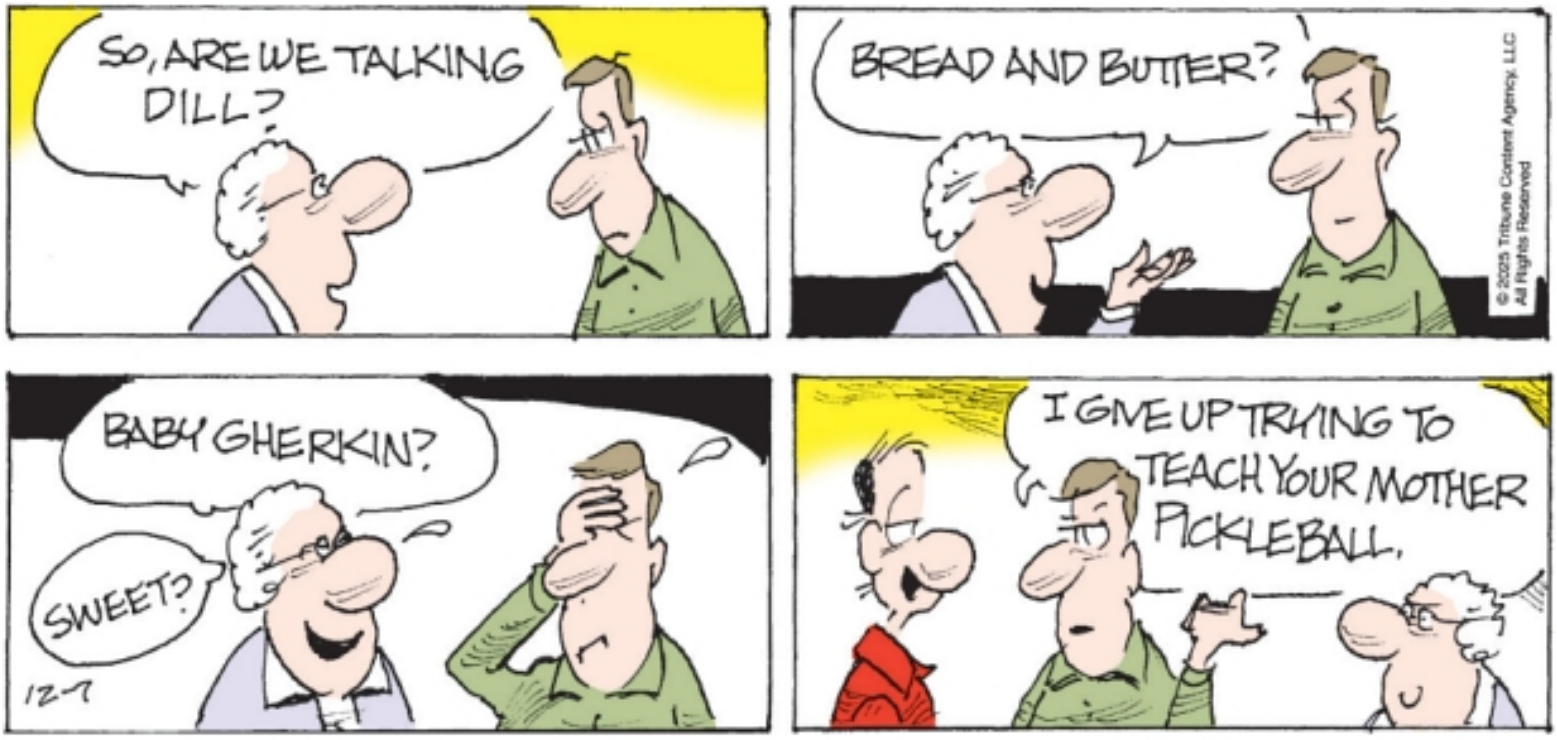
The Middletons By Ralph Dunagin and Dana Summers


SO, ARE WE TALKING DILL?
BREAD AND BUTTER?
BABY GHERKIN?
SWEET?
I GIVE UP TRYING TO TEACH YOUR MOTHER PICKLEBALL.
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Back to Comics

DICK TRACY
CHARLES ETTINGER
MIKE CURTIS
COLORS: SHANE FISHER
TRACY'S HALL OF FAME
CHRISTOPHER DARDEN
BORN IN CALIFORNIA IN 1956, DARDEN WORKED IN THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR 15 YEARS, AND WAS A CO-PROSECUTOR IN THE O.J. SIMPSON MURDER CASE. HE HAS CO-AUTHORED A NUMBER OF CRIME NOVELS, AND HAS APPEARED ON TV AS A LEGAL ANALYST.
-LT. WALTER REIMER
GPS TRACKER
HEY, YOU!
YOU MESS WITH OUR RIG!
NO! OW!
OS! IT'S A COP CAR!
COPS! QUICK! GET IN!
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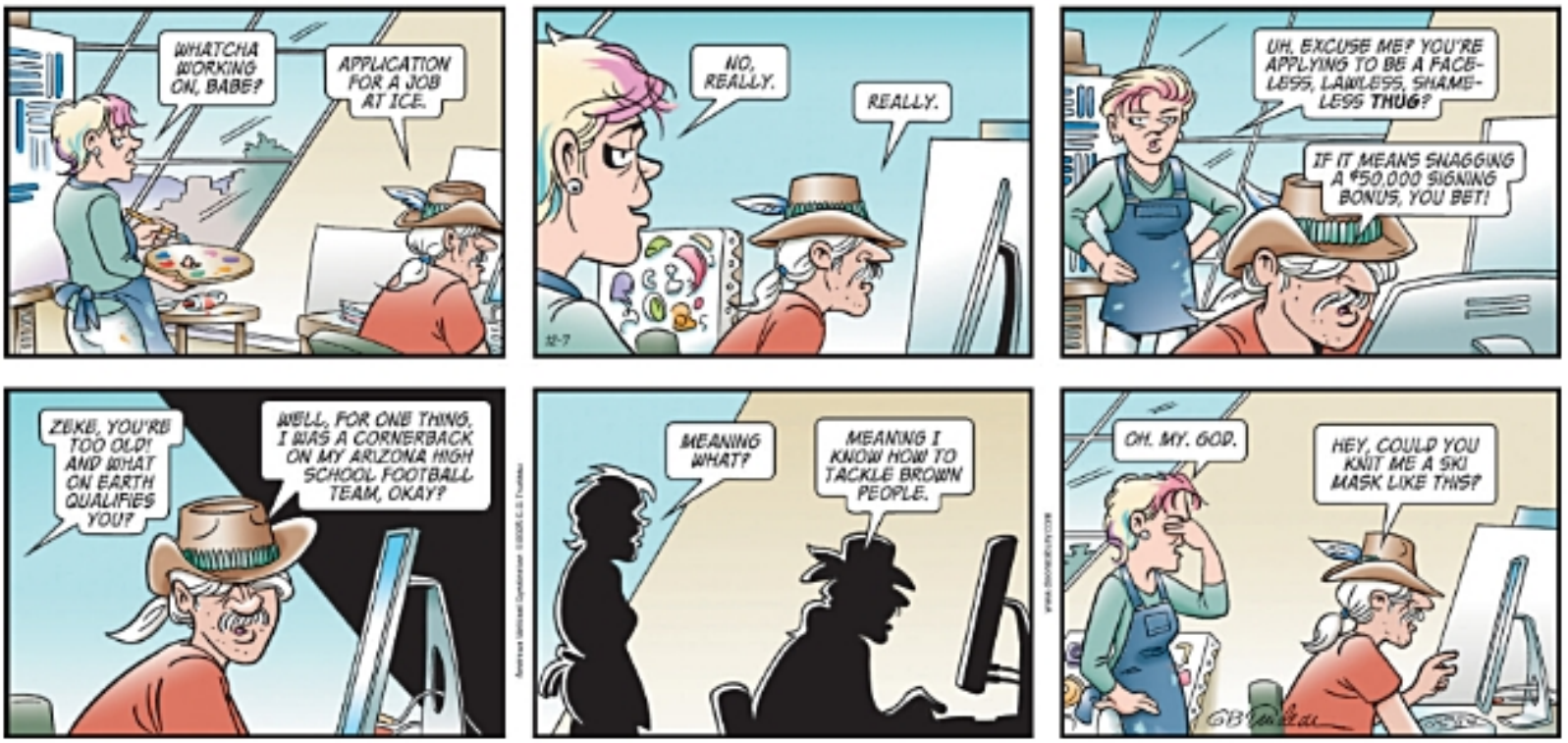
12/07
THEY TURNED!
STAY CALM AND GET US OUTTA HERE.

Back to Comics

Doonesbury By Garry Trudeau


WHATCHA WORKING ON, BABE?
APPLICATION FOR A JOB AT ICE.
NO, REALLY.
REALLY.
UH, EXCUSE ME? YOU'RE APPLYING TO BE A FACELESS, LAWLESS, SHAMELESS THUG?
IF IT MEANS SNAGGING A $50,000 SIGNING BONUS, YOU BET!
ZEKE, YOU'RE TOO OLD! AND WHAT ON EARTH QUALIFIES YOU?
WELL, FOR ONE THING, I WAS A CORNERBACK ON MY ARIZONA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM, OKAY?
MEANING WHAT?
MEANING I KNOW HOW TO TACKLE BROWN PEOPLE.
OH. MY. GOD.
HEY, COULD YOU KNIT ME A SKI MASK LIKE THIS?

Back to Comics

Prickly City By Scott Stantis

STANTIS
PRICKLYCITY@GMAIL.COM
DO YOU EVER WONDER HOW AMERICA WOULD RESPOND TO A PEARL HARBOR ATTACK TODAY?
2:12
Kittyking
FAKE NEWS!!!
Potatopatriot
Japan bombs Pearl Harbor!!!
This is a day that will live in infamy
Potatobrain23
YEAH, THAT SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT...
12/7/23 SCOTT STANTIS/ DIST. BY ANDREWS MCMEEL FOR UFS

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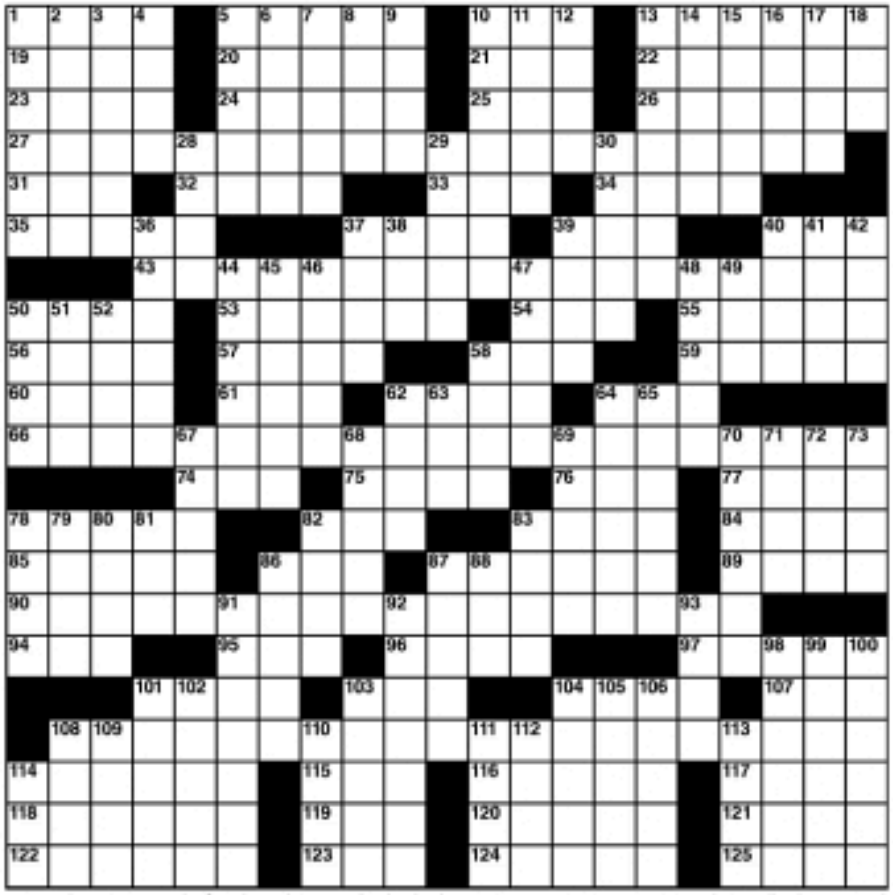
DIVERSE COLLECTIONS: Centrally located

By Mark McClain | Edited by Stanley Newman
(stanxwords.com)



Last week's answers can be found in today's "Puzzle Island Solutions."

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Across

1 See 115-Across
5 Greek stuffed grape leaf
10 Texter's "incidentally"
13 Brazilian dances
19 Historical stretches
20 Operatic deliveries
21 Leave amazed
22 Practical jokes
23 Irish county
24 Double Nobelist Pauling
25 Agent, briefly
26 Bit of legalese
27 Annual theater award
31 Disneyland's Main Street, __
32 Latvian capital
33 Atom with a charge
34 Laundry appliance
35 Inherently
37 "Billion" prefix
39 French article
40 A/C measure
43 Challenges for adolescents
50 Foreshadow
53 Sentence excerpt
54 Unconventional
55 Bring together
56 Frying medium
57 Arabian nation
58 Winter bug
59 Trimming tool
60 One grand, for short
61 Brief snooze
62 Watered-down
64 Prefix for point
66 Manufacturing coordination
74 Novelist Tan
75 Native Canadians
76 Taunting exclamation
77 Spanish love
78 Initially
82 Investment newsletter rating
83 MD's ASAP
84 Move higher
85 Beer from Japan
86 Puppy or parrot
87 Nothing more than
89 Mythical river
90 Football strategist
94 Mermaid's home
95 All-important
96 Years ago
97 Mr. Clean rival
101 So-so
103 List shortener
104 "Should that happen..."
107 Curator's deg.
108 Baseball's fall celebrators
114 Sentence ender
115 With 1-Across, fairly divided
116 Empathetic comment
117 Wetlands bird
118 Esoteric
119 Very long time span
120 Live it up
121 Diminutive ending
122 Closed in on
123 Ambulance destinations: Abbr.
124 Words of clarification
125 Get rid of

Down

1 Get back, as losses
2 Stir up
3 __ sauce (shrimp topping)
4 Calls (for)
5 The __ Lama
6 Faucet gasket
7 Stella McCartney's mom
8 Hawaiian island
9 Affinity grp.
10 Cake beside a sink
11 Pre-adolescent
12 Was in tears
13 Areas of knowledge
14 Childish comeback
15 County on San Francisco Bay
16 Rare blood type, for short
17 Similar (to)
18 Tax form no.
28 Ash or almond
29 Bach-era dance
30 Ate well
36 Accelerated
37 Mom's mom
38 Apple hardware platform
39 Pakistani language
40 Naval lockup
41 Parisian pate
42 __-friendly software
44 Word derived from a name
45 Department store founder
46 Pictorial chart
47 Oktoberfest music
48 Glove material
49 German conjunction
50 Crunchy sandwiches
51 Hawaiian island
52 Globule
58 Wide renown
62 Slender and strong
63 Compass reading
64 Hawaiian thanks
65 "Understood!"
67 Language of old Rome
68 Sharp, as eyesight
69 Potentially objectionable
70 Like swamps
71 Send forth, as light
72 Overly interested
73 Fearsome dino
78 Short-lived trends
79 Words of understanding
80 Nadal nickname
81 "Steady as __ goes"
82 Large collection
83 Hook's aide
86 Port facilities
87 Starting on
88 Co. designation
91 Lost traction
92 Skin soothers
93 Hoof sound
98 Trouble-free
99 Deserving attention
100 Wore well
101 Monastery resident
102 Unaided
103 Wrong move
104 "__ my reasons"
105 Riding charges
106 Silvery fish
108 Once existed
109 Whale cousin
110 Fencing blade
111 Amazon Alexa alternative
112 Included in an email
113 Tops, as a torte
114 Skillet

Back to Puzzles

Appendix

By John Andrew Agpalo | Edited by Patti Varol

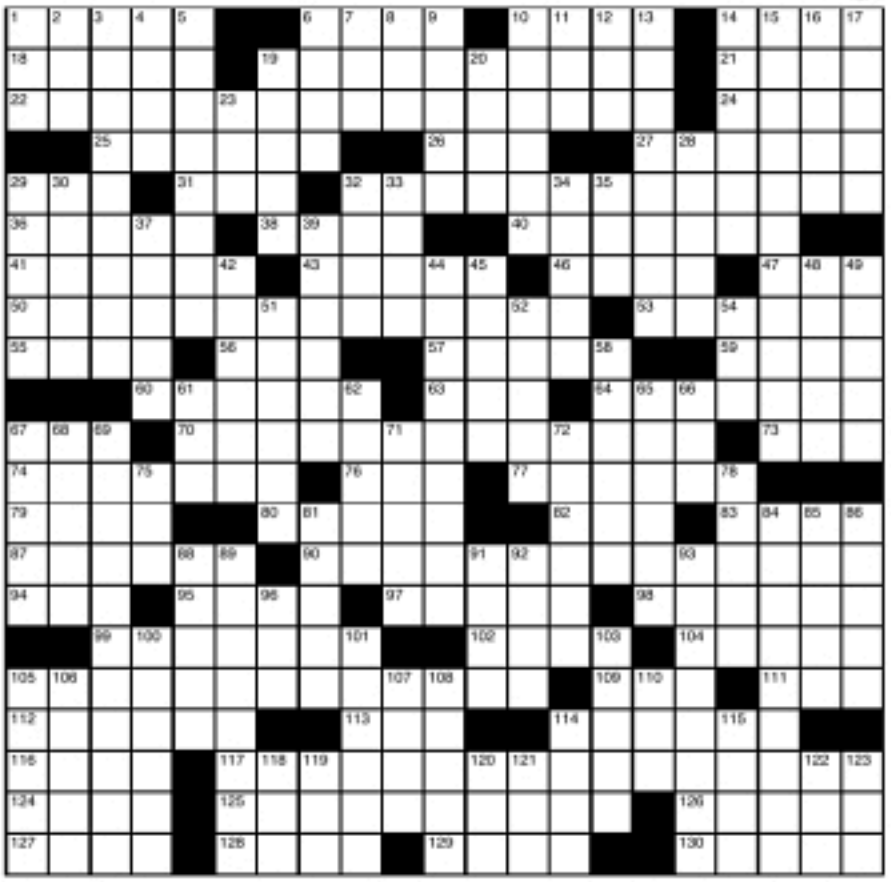
Across

1 "The Count of Monte Cristo" novelist
6 Gallagher of Oasis
10 Sour taste
14 Queue before Q
18 "Didn't we just see this?"
19 Meat dish topped with mashed potatoes
21 Ohio border lake
22 Compensation for those expecting bad outcomes?
24 Like some parks: Abbr.
25 Coat flaps
26 Receipt fig.
27 This evenin'
29 Quick chats?
31 Iguana, to some
32 Gem that's been photoshopped?
36 LuPone of "Agatha All Along"
38 Croc, but not gator
40 Jalapeño kin
41 Front covers?
43 Cartography collection
46 Poetic contraction
47 Browning's "__ Lippo Lippi"
50 Class that teaches the science behind flair bartending?
53 Periods of inactivity
55 Kinda-sorta
56 Rep. group
57 Pottery supplies
59 Went down
60 Dramamine target
63 Yale grad
64 Shoulder ornament
67 Vegan sammie
70 Paper jam?
73 Pair
74 Stuffed meat dish
76 Tattle (on)
77 Tiltrotor military aircraft
79 Writer Bombeck
80 Boondi __: spiced yogurt dish
82 Dead __ Scrolls
83 Alleviate
87 With all judges present
90 Well-worn long tops?
94 Opposite of paleo-
95 Smell
97 Glinda, to Elphaba, at first
98 Snare
99 Secondary thread
102 Ikebana vessel
104 Gleefully spiteful
105 Genetic makeup of a Trojan war hero?
109 Lentil dish
111 Pack animal
112 LASIK target
113 Lennox of R&B
114 Hindu god with the head of an elephant
116 Create a narrative out of reality show footage, e.g.
117 Message to a graduating class at an occult school?
124 Tibetan monk
125 Sine qua nons
126 Kevin McHale's "Glee" role
127 Serpents on sarcophagi
128 Frost's "The __ Not Taken"
129 Race goal, sometimes
130 Damp

Down

1 Who __ Nation: Saints fans
2 Disgusted sound
3 Turbulent situation
4 Japanese consumer electronics brand
5 __ turtle
6 Source of grief
7 Skater Midori
8 Org. with bomb-sniffing dogs
9 One spelling of an Asian gambling hub
10 Column that's beside the point?
11 Bee fore?
12 Actor Cage, casually
13 Hand motions
14 McCartney's songwriting partner
15 Application for dubious advice
16 Wee
17 Email ancestor
19 Irish speakers, e.g.
20 Press rooms?
23 "Isn't that something"
28 Visual style that tricks the eye
29 Card table declaration
30 __ syrup
32 Greedy choice
33 Depend (on)
34 Wee
35 Rapper Dr. __
37 Front-wheel alignment
39 Occur
42 Brynhild's beloved, in Norse myth
44 Find out
45 Places for small herb gardens
48 Option for a library book
49 Invite for
51 More meddlesome
52 African capital
54 Tempe sch.
58 Start of the Marine Corps motto
61 Therapists' org.
62 Bright spots?
65 Unlicensed radio broadcaster
66 Body spray brand
67 Fuss in the mirror
68 Carried
69 Cocktail ingredient
71 Wonderland cake words
72 Contents of college blue books
75 Trout's team, on scoreboards
78 Gossipy person
81 Hairstyles that many pick?
84 Carrier in French Polynesia
85 Performs like Ella
86 Awards for excellent plays and players
88 Aristocratic
89 Turner once big in the music industry?
91 __ Strauss & Co.
92 Big-screen movie format
93 119-Down figure
96 Spanish cheer
100 Range that includes Utah's Kings Peak
101 Sat on the kitchen counter, perhaps
103 Cheeses from the Netherlands
105 Fast Amtrak train
106 Musical conclusions
107 Pam's successor on "The Office"
108 Cheerful ditties
110 Whichever
114 Coins in a game of dreidel
115 Houston MLBer
118 Spanish bear
119 Country that turns 250 years old in 2026: Abbr.
120 Whopper
121 [Stop shearing me!]
122 Not trans
123 Fixed

12/7



Last week's answers can be found in today's "Puzzle Island Solutions."

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Jumble

Unscramble the six Jumbles, one letter per square, to form six words. Then arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by this cartoon.

RNOEYR

GOLNAO

LPTAEL

SREEYG

BTDUIO

RYEDNO

PRINT YOUR ANSWER IN THE CIRCLES BELOW

This week's answers can be found in today's "Puzzle Island Solutions."

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PlayJumble.com

Sudoku

12/7

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box in bold borders contains every digit 1 to 9.

Level: 1 2 3 4

					1		6	
2								
	5		4		7		1	
	3				9			
9	7						8	3
			3					2
	1		2		3		4	
7								8
	8		1					

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Back to Puzzles

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RNOEYR

GOLNAO

LPTAEL

SREEYG

BTDUIO

RYEDNO

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

You did! Welcome! We've been expecting you.
Wait! I know I pushed "H"!
12/7
HE HOPED HE'D GET INTO HEAVEN BUT INSTEAD FOUND HIMSELF IN THE ---

PRINT YOUR ANSWER IN THE CIRCLES BELOW

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Level: 1 2 3 4

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	5		4		7		1	
	3				9			
9	7						8	3
			3					2
	1		2		3		4	
7								8
	8		1					

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Quote-Acrostic

1. Define clues, writing in Words column over numbered dashes.
2. Transfer letters to numbered squares in diagram.
3. When pattern is completed, quotation can be read left to right. The first letters of the filled-in words reading down form an acrostic yielding the speaker's name and the topic of the quotation.

Clues **Words**

A. Soothe ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
90 147 105 56 8 46 135

B. Kind ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
97 62 33 17 28 106

C. Linking ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
36 79 54 38 66 5 130

D. Brunch dish ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
55 110 13 119 10 149

E. Parades: 2 wds. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
94 81 141 9 53 73 137 69

F. Decayed tree part, perhaps ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
142 67 136 132 7 49 120 112

G. Opened wide ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
35 145 85 48 152 131

H. Didn't act up ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
146 24 78 34 44 64 121

I. Struggles ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
138 107 22 52 23 150 128

J. Purpose ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
125 31 88 95 42 117

K. "____ Man," by The Beatles ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
74 15 111 124 71 12 86

L. Spectral ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
127 58 27 116 20 140 134

M. Tolerate ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
143 103 113 59 83 123

N. "____ Christmas" (holiday song) ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
50 91 68 80 45

O. "Far out!" ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
77 101 139 29 84 153 100

P. Tizzy ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
41 25 63 151 102 99

Q. Halfhearted ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
18 148 47 82 96 129 16 60

R. Remote ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
14 114 108 3 70 30 144

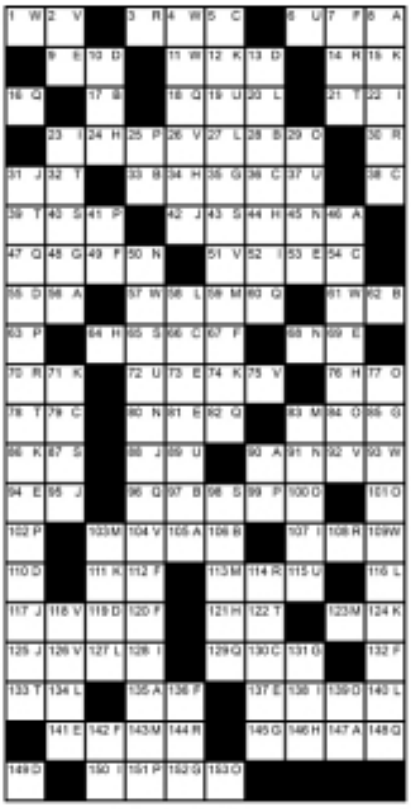
S. Hand brake, e.g. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
40 43 65 98 87

T. Belabor ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
21 78 39 133 32 122

U. Stiff ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
6 19 89 72 37 115

V. "Inside Out" subjects ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
2 51 92 75 118 104 126 26

W. Lake crosser ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
4 93 1 61 109 11 57



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By Cornelia Paws. Edited by Debbie Manber Kupfer.
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Ahoy!

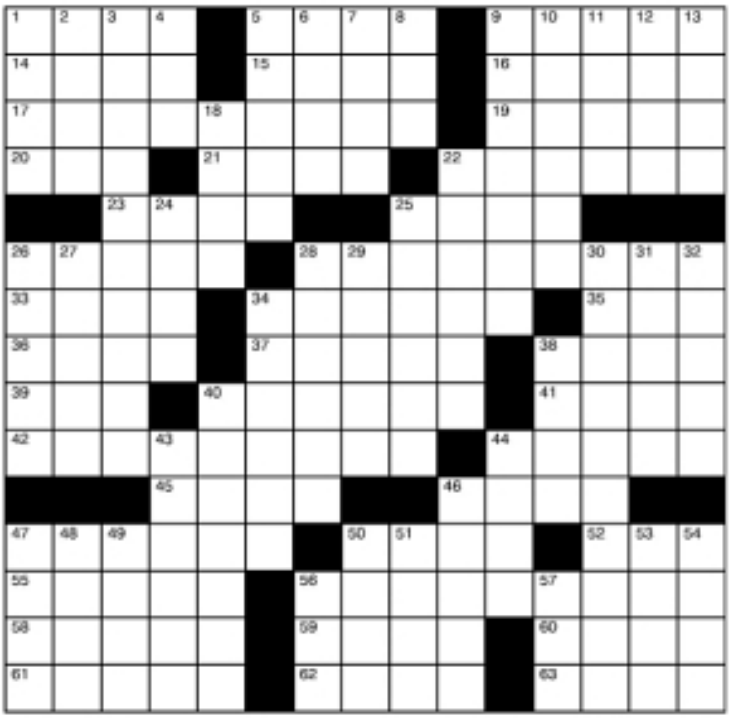
By Charles Preston

Across

1 Eight dry quarts
5 Theda Bara, for one
9 Zeal
14 Yodeler's answer
15 "On the Waterfront" director Kazan
16 Man with a code
17 Lea
19 Larger than Lincoln
20 Big ___, CA
21 Garfield's pal
22 Lower back region
23 Irving Berlin hit "___ This a Lovely Day ...?"
25 Dubonnet or claret
26 Prices
28 Memorable sportswriter Rice
33 Citrus fruit
34 Puts up
35 Attorney's rate
36 Hawkeye portrayer Alda
37 Bridal path
38 Ollie's sidekick
39 Court divider
40 Lustrous fabric
41 Not his
42 Final resting place of Elvis
44 Secretariat, e.g.
45 Hit Broadway musical of the 1960s
46 Reasons for braces
47 Care of the entire patient
50 Teenage sleuth Nancy
52 Garden tool
55 Site of an 1836 battle
56 Its capital is Godthab
58 Phileas Fogg's portrayer
59 Hostels
60 Bakery fixture
61 Urges on
62 Brief letter
63 Western Colorado feature

Down

1 Backgammon needs
2 Light beige
3 Personal charms
4 Evander Holyfield stats
5 African plain
6 Jai ___
7 Open-pit, for one
8 Hippie home
9 Totals
10 The Desert Fox
11 Dreary
12 Government watchdog: acron.
13 1954 Hitchcock thriller "___ Window"
18 Junior and others
22 Tilia Americana tree
24 British carbine
25 Like Avila
26 Louder than a ping
27 Tennessee pro, pre-Titan
28 Johnny Winter's instrument
29 Out of bed
30 Men's cologne
31 Approaches
32 Thickheaded
34 Pagan idols
38 "Little ___ of Horrors"
40 Vivaldi's "The Four ___"
43 Rang a bell
44 Actress Goldie
46 Gaggle members
47 "___ 'Em High"
48 Gallimaufry
49 Etna emission
50 Ian Fleming adventure
51 Hit Broadway musical of the 1990s
53 Change for a fin
54 "Showboat" author Ferber
56 Part of a Tom Collins
57 Sellers co-star Herbert



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puzzle island solutions

Last week's crosswords

"SPY-FI"

C	A	D	E	T		A	L	L	A	H			O	R	E		T	M	A	N
A	V	I	L	A		L	O	I	R	E		B	L	O	W		R	E	N	O
F	I	V	E	O	C	L	O	C	K	S	H	A	D	O	W		I	N	T	O
E	V	E	N		O	I	N	K	S		E	R	I	S		I	S	L	E	S
		S	A	S	H	E	S			G	E	N	E	T	I	C	C	O	D	E
E	M	T		T	E	D		L	A	U	D				T	A	U			
M	A	I	N	E	R		S	E	L	L		L	A	S	T	N	I	G	H	T
O	R	N	A	M	E	N	T	A	L	P	L	A	N	T			T	H	A	W
	C	G	I			O	A	R			I	S	A	A	C			A	V	I
			L	U	S	T	Y		L	A	T	S			I	R	O	N	O	N
V	A	N	I	S	H	E	S	W	I	T	H	O	U	T	A	T	R	A	C	E
I	D	O	T	O	O			A	L	O	E		P	R	O	S	T			
S	L	C			E	A	S	Y	A			S	L	O			E	T	A	
T	E	A	M			T	H	I	C	K	E	N	I	N	G	A	G	E	N	T
A	R	L	I	N	G	T	O	N		I	N	O	T		U	G	A	N	D	A
			S	A	O				A	N	E	W		O	N	E		N	Y	C
C	O	M	P	U	T	E	R	B	U	G			T	U	S	S	L	E		
U	B	O	L	T		M	E	A	T		P	E	R	T	H		A	S	P	S
P	A	R	A		N	O	N	M	O	N	E	T	A	R	Y	A	S	S	E	T
I	M	A	C		A	R	E	A		A	L	A	M	O		B	E	E	N	E
D	A	L	E		B	Y	E			Y	E	L	P	S		C	R	E	S	T

"Think Hard"

B	R	I	B	E			W	O	O	S		S	P	E	C		D	E	R	N
L	A	S	E	R		S	H	I	R	T		A	E	R	O		E	V	I	E
A	P	P	L	E	P	E	E	L	E	R		M	A	R	M	A	L	A	D	E
T	T	Y	L		A	I	N	T		A	P	E	S		P	R	I	D	E	D
			H	O	G	S		A	D	D	I	S		D	O	O	V	E	R	S
A	N	N	O	D	O	M	I	N	I		D	I	N	E	S		E	S	S	
L	O	O	P	E	D		T	K	O		G	E	T	N	E	A	R			
O	R	B		S	A	G	S		S	M	I	S	H			M	E	H	T	A
T	A	R	E		S	O	L	O	M	O	N			L	A	I	D	O	U	T
		A	R	M		P	A	T	I	O		H	M	O	N	G		M	R	I
E	L	I	M	I	N	A	T	I	O	N	T	O	U	R	N	A	M	E	N	T
R	U	N		N	O	S	E	S		M	A	S	S	E		S	U	V		
A	T	E	D	I	R	T			F	A	C	E	T	A	T		D	I	O	R
S	E	R	U	M				F	R	A	N	K		S	L	I	M		S	N	O
			L	A	P	P	O	O	L		S	S	E		R	O	S	I	T	A
	P	S	Y		O	R	E	O	S		O	P	E	D	E	D	I	T	O	R
F	A	I	N	T	L	Y		M	I	L	N	E		E	D	E	N			
A	N	G	O	R	A		I	K	E	A		E	L	M	O		A	B	U	T
C	E	N	T	E	R	I	C	E		M	A	D	E	O	F	S	T	O	N	E
T	R	E	E		I	N	K	Y		B	L	O	G	S		E	R	O	D	E
S	A	D	D		S	A	Y	S		S	A	S	S			C	A	N	O	N

"Dissed"

T	A	R			D	R	A	W	N		I	D	E	S
E	R	A			A	E	I	O	U		M	I	R	E
D	I	S	C	O	V	E	R	E	D		P	S	A	T
S	A	P	O	N	I	F	Y		G	H	O	S	T	S
			E	S	T	E		T	E	A	S	E		
P	A	D	R	E		R	O	E		T	E	R	S	E
E	D	I	C	T	S		P	A	L	E		V	O	L
R	I	S	E		T	H	E	M	E		D	I	N	E
D	O	C		D	Y	E	R		I	P	E	C	A	C
U	S	H	E	R		L	A	B		A	L	E	R	T
		A	M	E	N	D		A	A	R	E			
S	E	R	B	I	A		A	S	C	E	T	I	C	S
P	A	G	E		D	I	S	S	I	D	E	N	C	E
U	S	E	R		I	R	K	E	D			T	I	E
R	E	D	S		R	E	S	T	S			O	I	L

Last week's Quote-Acrostic

CYNTHIA RYLANT: IN NOVEMBER:
In November, people are good to each other. They carry pies to each other's homes and talk by crackling woodstoves, sipping mellow cider. They travel very far on a special November day just to share a meal.

Last week's Sudoku

8	4	5	1	6	7	9	2	3
6	7	1	9	3	2	4	8	5
3	2	9	5	8	4	1	6	7
7	8	6	2	1	5	3	4	9
5	9	2	7	4	3	8	1	6
1	3	4	6	9	8	5	7	2
4	6	3	8	7	9	2	5	1
9	5	7	4	2	1	6	3	8
2	1	8	3	5	6	7	9	4

This week's Jumble

ORNERY PALLET OUTBID
LAGOON GEYSER YONDER

He hoped he'd get into Heaven but instead found himself in the —

NOT-SO-GREAT BEYOND

Back to Puzzles

Bridge

Q.1—Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ A 5 ♥ A 2 ♦ K 10 6 4 ♣ A Q J 7 3

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
?			

What call would you make?

Q.2—North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ A Q 9 8 7 5 3 ♥ 8 ♦ 6 ♣ A 8 7 2

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

What call would you make?

Q.3—East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ 7 5 4 ♥ A 8 6 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ K J 10 8 7

Partner opens 1NT, 15-17, and right-hand opponent passes.
What call would you make?

Q.4—Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ Q ♥ A K 10 5 3 ♦ J 7 6 ♣ Q 8 4 3

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠	Dbl	Pass
?			

What call would you make?

Answers in Monday's comics pages.

— *Bob Jones, Tribune Content Agency*

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Word Game

This game challenges you to find as many words as you can, as quickly as you can, in one master word.

PASSIVITY (pah-SIV-ih-tee): The state of being inert or inactive.

Can you find 19 or more words in PASSIVITY?

Average mark: 14 words
Time limit: 25 minutes

Here are the rules:

1. Words must be four or more letters. 2. Words that acquire four letters by the addition of an "s," such as "bats" and "cats," are not used. 3. Use only one form of a verb — either "pose" or "posed," not both. 4. Proper nouns and slang terms are not used.

Answers to the word game:

pass; past; pasty; patsy; pita; pity; psst; apsis; sati; spat; spay; spit; stay; vast; visa; visit; vista; vita; tipsy

— Kathleen Saxe, distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication for UFS

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